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POETICAL WORKS

OF

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

EDITED BY ROBERT BELL

VOLUME II

LONDON
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND
1855

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The Canterbury Tales.

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POEMS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The Canterbury Tales.

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGE.

OWRE Hoste sawh that the brighte sonne
The arke of his artificial day hath i-ronne
The fourthe part, of half an hour and more;
And though he were nat depe expert in lore,
He wist it was the eightetene day[1]
Of April, that is messanger to May;
And sawe wel that the schade of every tree
Was in the lengthe the same quantite
That was the body erecte, that caused it;
And therfore by the schadwe he took his wit,
That Phebus, which that schoon so fair and bright,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on hight;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude;
And sodeynly he plight his hors aboute.
'Lordynges,' quod he, 'I warne you al the route,
The fourthe party of this day is goon;
Now, for the love of God and of seint Jon,
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth[2] as ye may,
Lordynges, the tyme passeth night and day,

[1] *Eightetene.* This is the reading in which the MSS. seem mostly to agree. The MS. Harl. reads *threttenthe.* Tyrwhitt has *eighte and twenty.*—W.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads, *forthe. Ferforth* in the text is taken from Tyrwhitt, and is probably correct, as agreeing better both with the sense and metre.

And stolith fro us, what pryvely slepyng,
And what thurgh necligence in oure wakyng,
As doth the stroem, that torneth never agayn,
Descendyng fro the mounteyn into playn.
Wel can Senek and many philosopher
Bywaylen time, more than gold in cofre.
For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme schendeth us, quod he.
It wil nat come agayn, withoute drede,
Nomore than wol Malkyns maydenhede,[1]
Whan sche had lost it in hir wantownesse.
Let us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.
'Sir Man of Lawe,' quod he, 'so have ye blisse,
Telle us a tale anon, as forward ys.
Ye be submitted thurgh your fre assent
To stonden in this cas at my juggement.
Acquyteth yow, and holdeth youre byheste;
Than have ye doon your devour atte leste.'
'Host,' quod he, '*De par Dieux jeo assente*,[2]
To breke forward is nat myn entent.
Byheste is dette, and I wol holde fayn
Al my byhest, I can no better sayn.
For such lawe as a man geveth another wight,
He schuld himselve usen it by right.
Thus wol oure text:[3] but natheles certeyn
I can right now non other tale seyn,

---

[1] A proverbial phrase, occurring, as Tyrwhitt observes, in *Piers Plowman*:—

'Ye have no more merit
Of masse ne of houres,
Than Malkyn of hire maidenhood
That no man desireth.'

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *Depardeux* I assent; that in the text is taken from Tyrwhitt. The lawyer is thus made characteristically to use the law terms in French, which was then the language of the courts, though a statute, passed 36 Edward III., enacted that all pleas should be pleaded in English. This was not, however, generally enforced, even in the time of Sir John Fortescue, a hundred years later.—HALLAM, *Lit. Mid. Ages*, vol. i. c. i. § 52.

[3] The Man of Lawe is tinctured with the pedantry of his profession, and thinks that no reason is good unless sanctioned by some authority from a law-book.

That[1] Chaucer, thay he can but lewedly
On metres and on rymyng craftely,
Hath seyd hem in such Englisch as he can,
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many man.
And gif he have nought sayd hem, leeve brother,
In o bok, he hath seyd hem in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
Moo than Ovide made of mencioun[2]
In his Epistelles, that ben so olde.
What schuld I tellen hem, syn they be tolde?
In youthe he made[3] of Ceys and Alcioun,
And siththe hath he spoke of everychon
These noble wyfes, and these lovers eeke,
Who so wole his large volume seeke,
Cleped the seintes legende of Cupide;[4]
Ther may he see the large woundes wyde
Of Lucresse, and of Babiloun Tysbee,
The sorwe of Dido for the fals Enee;
The tree of Philles for hir Demephon;
The pleynt of Dyane[5] and of Ermyon,
Of Adrian,[6] and of Ysyphilee;
The barreyn yle stondyng in the see;
The dreynt Leandere for his fayre Erro;
The teeres of Eleyn, and eek the woo

---

[1] Tyrwhitt reads *but* from one MS. The reading in the text is good English of the time, but the modern construction would require a negative. [2] A transposition for *made mention of.*

[3] *Made* means *wrote poetry*. *Maker* was a common word in the middle ages for a poet. Of the lovers here mentioned only seven are found in the *Saintes Legende of Cupide*, otherwise the *Legende of Gode Women*, in which are the stories of Cleopatra and Philomene, meaning Philomela, not mentioned here. They are all taken from Ovid's *Heroides sive Epistolæ*.

[4] It appears that this was one name of the poem which is now known by the title of the *Legende of Gode Women*. This name is one example of the way in which Chaucer entered into the spirit of the heathen pantheism, as a real form of religion. He considers these persons, who suffered for love, to have been saints and martyrs for Cupid, just as Peter and Paul and Cyprian were martyrs for Christ.

[5] Dejanira, pronounced (like Italian) Deyanira, and so written by Tyrwhitt.

[6] Ariadne. The other misspellings are obvious.

Of Bryxseyde, and of Ladomia
The cruelte of the queen Medea,
The litel children hangyng by the hals,
For thilke Jason, that was of love so fals.
O Ypermystre, Penolope, and Alceste,
Youre wyfhood he comendeth with the beste.
But certeynly no worde writeth he
Of thilke wikked ensample of Canace,
That loved hir owen brother synfully;
On whiche corsed stories I seye fy;
Or elles of Tyro Appolonëus,[1]
How that the cursed kyng Anteochus
Byreft his doughter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to reede,
Whan he hir threw upon the pament.
And therfore he of ful avysement
Wold never wryte in non of his sermouns
Of such unkynde abhominaciouns;
Ne I wol non reherse, if that I may.
But of my tale how schal I do this day?
Me were loth to be lykned douteles
To Muses, that men clepen Pyerides.[2]
(*Methamorphoseos* wot what I mene);
But natheles I recche nat a bene,
They I come after him with hawe-bake,[3]
I speke in prose, and let him rymes make.'[4]

[1] The romance of *Apollonius of Tyre* existed in Latin before A.D. 900. A Saxon translation (which has been edited by Thorpe) is preserved in the library of Corpus Christi, Cam. The story is found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and in Gower's *Confessio Amantis;* was translated into barbarous Greek by the fugitives from Constantinople in the fifteenth century; was one of the earliest printed books; and forms the basis of the play of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, ascribed to Shakespeare.—See WARTON.

[2] He rather means, I think, the daughters of Pierus, who contended with the Muses, and were changed into pies. Ovid., *Met.* v.—T.

[3] This word has puzzled Tyrwhitt and all the commentators. It appears to be a form of 'hark back,' a term in hunting, by which the hounds, when in their eagerness they have overshot the scent, are called back to take it up again from the place they have already hunted over. 'Hark forward' is the reverse of this. The Man of Lawe means to say, 'Though I have to *hark back*, or return, upon a tale already told.'

[4] The lawyer says, 'I have no scruple in borrowing one of Chaucer's

And with that word, he with a sobre cheere
Bygan his tale, as yē schal after heere.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

[MR. WRIGHT supposes this tale to have been derived from a French romance, and traces its several incidents to various mediæval stories, amongst which he enumerates the romances of *Emare*, in Ritson's collection; that of the *Chevalier au Cigne*, and the still older Saxon romance of *King Offa*, preserved in a Latin form by Matthew Paris; the *Roman de la Violette; Le Bone Florence of Rome*, also in Ritson; a chapter of *Vincent of Beauvais*; and the *Gesta Romanorum*, that inexhaustible treasure-house of fiction. Tyrwhitt says it is taken, with little variation, from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which was written, as its author states, in the sixteenth year of the reign of Richard II., 1392-3, and therefore before the probable date of *The Canterbury Tales*. Upon the lines in the prologue beginning, 'But certeynly no worde writeth he,' Tyrwhitt founded a conjecture that the friendship which had subsisted between the two poets was interrupted in their old age, which he thinks is confirmed by the fact that in the copies of the *Confessio Amantis* made subsequently to the accession of Henry IV., Gower omitted some verses in praise of Chaucer. Sir Harris Nicolas, to whom all admirers of the poet are deeply indebted for his complete demolition of the unfounded theories of his predecessors, states his opinion that Tyrwhitt's grounds for this supposition are 'very light;' and that 'he has answered his own suggestion; for he justly observes that Chaucer could not have meant to show disrespect to Gower in a piece in which, like *The Man of Lawes Tale*, almost every incident is borrowed from Gower;' and that 'the omission of the lines alluded to in the late copy of the *Con-*

tales entire, because my business, as a lawyer, is to talk in rose: is, as a poet, to make rhymes.'

fessio Amantis, may be explained by Chaucer being then dead.' Now the grounds of Tyrwhitt's hypothesis may be, and, perhaps, are light; but certainly not for the reasons here mentioned. There is no necessity to suppose that Chaucer took his tale from Gower—on the contrary, it is much more likely, as Mr. Wright observes, that both poems might be traced to a common original in some popular romance; and the fact of Chaucer's being dead, instead of furnishing an explanation of the omission of the complimentary lines, suggests a reason why Gower should be desirous of retaining them as a record of his attachment to his deceased friend. On the whole, it appears that Tyrwhitt's conjecture is founded upon no positive and indisputable evidence; but neither has it yet been satisfactorily disproved.

Of Chaucer's heroic and comic styles we have already had examples in the three first tales; in this exquisitely touching picture of resignation, founded upon Christian faith and hope, he displays his powers of pathos. The pervading idea is that virtue is not to expect or seek its recompence in earthly happiness. Constance, that 'nobil creature,' is in fact too good to receive her reward in this world, which is therefore only the scene of her warfare and purification. The tone of mind produced by the perusal of the poem is one of awe and sober elevation, an effect like that of Longfellow's kindred story of *Evangeline*, which is marred, however, by his unfortunate choice of the (so-called) hexameter verse. The metre selected by Chaucer is, on the contrary, well adapted to a pathetic subject. It was apparently first used by him in English poetry, and was taken, no doubt, from the Italian *ottava rima*, which it resembles in cadence, but from which it differs in wanting the fifth line to rhyme with the first and third.]

O HATEFUL harm, condicioun of povert,
With thurst, with cold, with honger so con-
To asken help it schameth in thin hert, [foundyd,
If thou non aske, with neede so art thou woundyd,
That verray neede unwrappeth al thy wounde hyd;

Maugre thyn heed thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy dispence.
Thow blamest Crist, and seyst ful bitterly,
He mysdeparteth riches temporal;
And thyn neyhebour thou wytes synfully;
And seyst thou hast to litel, and he hath al.
Parfay, seystow, som tyme he rekne schal,
Whan that his tayl schal brennen in the gleede,
For he nought helpeth the needful in his neede.
Herkneth what is the sentens of the wyse,
Bet is to dye than have indigence;[1]
Thy selve neyghebour wol the despyse,
If thou be pore, farwel thy reverence.
Yet of the wyse man tak this sentence,
Alle the dayes of pore men be wikke;
Be war therfore or thou come to that prikke.
If thou be pore, thy brother hateth the,
And alle thy frendes fleeth fro the, allas!
O riche marchaundz, ful of wele be ye,
O noble prudent folk as in this cas,
Youre bagges beth nat fuld with ambes aas,[2]
But with sys synk, that renneth on your chaunce;
At Crystemasse wel mery may ye daunce.
Ye seeke land and see for your wynnynges,
As wyse folk as ye knowe alle thastates
Of regnes, ye be fadres of tydynges,
Of tales, bothe of pees and of debates.[3]
I were right now of tales desolat,
Nere that a marchaunt, gon siththen many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which ye schal after heere.
In Surrie[4] dwelled whilom a companye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sad and trewe,

---

[1] Proverbs xiv. 20.

[2] *Ambes aas* means *both ace* or *aces*. You are the fortunate ones of the earth; the dice are in your favour.

[3] There is even still a propriety in this description of merchants. Rothschild and Lafitte might have been said to know and calculate upon the state of kingdoms; and stockjobbers are still the *fathers* of many tidings both of peace and war.

[4] Syria.

That wyde where[1] sent hir spycerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyn riche of hewe.
Her chaffar was so thrifty and so newe,
That every wight had deynte to chaffare
With hem, and eek to selle hem of here ware.
Now fel it, that the maystres of that sort
Han schapen hem to Rome for to wende,
Were it for chapmanhode or for disport,
Non other message nolde they thider sende,
But came hemself to Rome, this is the ende;
And in such place as thought hem avauntage
For here entent, they tooke her herburgage.
Sojourned have these marchauntz in the toun
A certeyn tyme, as fel to here plesaunce.
But so bifell, that thexcellent renoun
Of themperoures doughter dame Custaunce
Reported was, with every circumstaunce,
Unto these Surrienz marchauntz, in such wyse
Fro day to day, as I schal you devyse.
This was the comyn voys of every man:
'Oure emperour of Rome, God him see!
A doughter hath, that, sith the world bygan,
To rekne as wel hir goodnes as her bewte,
Nas never such another as was sche.
I prey to God hir save and susteene,
And wolde sche were of al Europe the queene.
'In hire is hye bewte, withoute pryde;
Yowthe, withoute grefhed or foyle;
To alle hire werkes vertu is hire gyde;
Humblesse hath slayne in hir tyrrannye;
Sche is myrour of alle curtesye,
Hir herte is verrey chambre of holynesse,
Hir hond mynistre of fredom and almesse.'
And al this voys is soth, as God is trewe.
But now to purpos let us turne agein: [newe,
These marchantz have don fraught here schippes

[1] Widely, in every direction.

And whan they have this blisful made seyn,
Home to Surrey be they went agein,
And doon here needes, as they have don yore,
And lyven in wele, I can you say no more.
Now fel it, that these marchauntz stooden in grace
Of him that was the sowdan of Surrye.
For whan they come fro eny straunge place,
He wolde of his benigne curtesye
Make hem good chere, and busily aspye
Tydynges of sondry regnes, for to lere
The wordes that they mighte seen and heere.
Among other thinges specially
These marchauntz him told of dame Constaunce
So gret noblesse, in ernest so ryally,
That this sowdan hath caught so gret plesaunce
To have hir figure in his remembraunce,
That al his lust, and al his besy cure,
Was for to love hir, whiles his lyf may dure.
Paraventure in thilke large booke,[1]
Which that is cleped the heven, i-write was
With sterres, whan that he his burthe took,
That he for love schulde have his deth, allas!
For in the sterres, clerere than is glas,
Is wryten, God woot, who so cowthe it rede,
The deth of every man, withouten drede.
In sterres many a wynter therbyfore,
Was write the deth of Ector and Achilles,
Of Pompe, Julius, er they were i-bore;
The stryf of Thebes, and of Ercules,
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle,
That no wight can wel rede it at the fulle.
This sowdan for his pryve counseil sent,
And schortly of this mater for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entent,

[1] Tyrwhitt quotes, as the original of these two stanzas, a passage from the *Megacosmus of Bernardus Sylvestris*, given in the margin of the MS. Cot. Lib.

And seyed hem certeyn, but he might have grace
To have Constance withinne a litel space,
He nas but deed, and charged hem in hyghe
To schapen for his lyf som remedye.
Dyverse men divers thinges seyde,[1]
The argumentes casten up and down;
Many a subtyl resoun forth they leyden;
They spekyn of magike, and of abusioun;
But finally, as in conclusioun,
They can nought seen in that non avauntage,
Ne in non other wey, save in mariage.
Then sawgh they therein such difficulte
By wey of resoun, to speke it al playn,
Bycause that ther was such dyversite
Bitwen here bothe lawes, as they sayn,
They trowe that 'no cristen prince wold fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,
That us was taught by Mahoun[2] oure prophete.'
And he answerde: 'Rather than I lese
Constance, I wol be cristen doubteles;
I moot be heres, I may non other cheese;
I pray you haldeth your arguments in pees,
Saveth my lyf, and beth nat recheles.
Goth, geteth hire that hath my lyf in cure,
For in this wo I may no lenger dure.'
What needeth gretter dilatacioun?
I say, by tretys and ambassatrye,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chyvalrye,
That in destruccioun of mawmetrye;
And in encresse of Cristes lawe deere,
They ben acordid, as ye schal after heere,

---

[1] This is an example of the way in which the inflections of the verb were gradually disused. The *n* is dropped in the word *seyde*, while it is retained in *leyden*, two lines lower down; in speaking, both words were pronounced alike, as appears by the fact that they are made to rhyme together.

[2] Mahomet, sometimes written *Mahound*.

How that the soudan and his baronage,
And alle his lieges schuld i-crystned be,
And he schal have Constance in mariage,
And certeyn gold, I not what quantite,
And therfore founden they suffisant seurte.
This same acord was sworn on every syde;
Now, fair Constance, almighty God the guyde!

Now wolde som men wayten, as I gesse,
That I schulde tellen al the purvyaunce,
That themperour of his gret noblesse
Hath schapen for his doughter dame Constaunce.
Wel may men knowe that so gret ordynaunce
May no man telle in so litel a clause,
As was arrayed for so high a cause.

Bisschops[1] ben schapen with hir for to wende,
Lordes, ladyes, and knightes of renoun,
And other folk ynowe, this is the ende.
And notefied is thurghout the toun,
That every wight with gret devocioun
Schulde preye Crist, that he this mariage
Receyve in gree, and spede this viage.

The day is come of hire departyng,
(I say the woful day that than is come)
That ther may be no lenger tarryyng,
But forthe-ward they dresse hem alle and some.
Constance, that with sorwe is overcome,
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hir to wende.
For wel sche saugh ther nas non other ende.

Allas! what wonder is it though sche wepte,
That schal be sent to straunge nacioun,
Fro freendes, that so tenderly hir kepte,
And to be bounde undur subjeccioun
Of oon sche knew nat his condicioun?

---

[1] So when Ethelbert married Bertha, daughter of the Christian King Charibert, she brought with her, to the court of her husband, a Gallican bishop named Leudhard, who was permitted to celebrate mass in the ancient British Church of St. Martin, near Canterbury.

Housbondes ben al goode, and han be yore;[1]
That knowen wyfes, I dar say no more.
'Fader,' sche seid, 'thy wrecched child Constaunce,
Thy yonge doughter fostred up so softe,
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesaunce
Over al thing, outaken Criste on lofte,[2]
Constaunce your child hir recomaundeth ofte
Unto your grace; for I schal into Surrye,
Ne schal I never see you more with ye.
'Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun
I most anoon, sethens it is your wille:
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun,
So geve me grace his hestes to fulfille,
I, wrecched womman, no fors they I spille![3]
Wommen ben born to thraldam and penaunce,
And to ben under mannes governaunce.'
I trowe at Troye whan Pirrus brak the wal,
Or Yleon that brend, Thebes the citee,[4]
Ne at Rome for the harme thurgh Hanibal,
That Romaynes have venquysshed tymes thre,
Nas herd such tender wepyng for pite,
As in the chambur was for hir partyng;
But forth sche moot, whether sche weep or syng.
O firste mevyng cruel firmament,
With thi diurnal swough that crowdest ay,
And hurlest al fro est to occident.
That naturelly wold hold another way;
Thyn crowdyng sette the heven in such array
At the bygynnyng of this fiers viage,
That cruel Martz hath slayn this marriage.
Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lordes helples falle, allas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.

---

[1] Ironical.

[2] Except Christ on high. [3] No matter though I perish.

[4] Or at Ilion that burned (or was burnt), or at the city of Thebes. The line would be improved by reading—

'Or Ileon brent, or Thebes the citee.'

O Mariz Attezere,[1] as in this caas;
O feble moone, unhappy been thi paas,
Thou knettest the ther thou art nat receyved,
Ther thou were wel fro thennes artow weyved.
Imprudent emperour of Rome, allas!
Was ther no philosopher in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than other in such caas?
Of viage is ther noon electioun.[2]
Namly to folk of heigh condicioun,
Nought whan a roote is of a birthe i-knowe?
Allas! we ben to lewed, and eek to slowe.
To schippe is brought this woful faire mayde
Solempnely, with every circumstaunce.
'Now Jhesu Crist so be with you,' sche sayde.
Ther nys nomor, but farwel, fair Custaunce;
She peyneth hire to make good contienaunce.
And forth I lete hire sayle in this manere,
And torne I wol agein to my matiere.
The moder of the sowdan, ful of vices,
Aspyed hath hir sones playn entente,
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices;[3]
And right anoon sche for hir counseil sent,
And they ben come, to knowe what sche ment;
And whan assembled was this folk in fere,
Sche sette hir doun, and sayd as ye schal heere.

[1] Tyrwhitt, who reads 'O Mars, O Atyzar,' acknowledges himself at a loss to choose between the different readings of this passage. Speght reads *O Mars, O occisier*, which is evidently an ignorant attempt to render the true reading intelligible. Tyrwhitt says that *atizar* signifies in Spanish *to inflame*; it may, therefore, mean *Mars inflamed*, or *angry*, as, when direct, he is called *Rubeus*.—See *Knyghtes Tale*.

[2] In the margin of the Lansdowne and Cotton MSS. is the following quotation from the *Liber Electionum* by Zael:—'Omnes sunt concordati quod electiones sint debiles, nisi in divitibus,' &c. Few would care to read the whole; but the meaning seems to be that the fortunes of people of high condition only are discoverable by the stars. An analogy may be observed in the superstition of the *Banshee*, or shrieking woman, believed by the Celts of Scotland and Ireland to foretel the death of persons of noble blood.

[3] The Mahomedan religion does not admit of the idea of a sacrifice or atonement; but all false religions were confounded in the popular mind.

'Lordes,' quod sche, 'ye knowen everichon,
How that my sone in pryntis for to lete
The holy lawes of our Alkaroun,[1]
Geven by Goddes messangere Makamete;
But oon avow to grete God I hete,
The lyf schuld rather out of my body stert,
Or Makametes law go out of myn hert.
'What schal us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldam to oure body and penaunce,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneyed Mahound oure creaunce?
But, lordes, wol ye maken assuraunce,
As I schal say, assentyng to my lore?
And I schal make us sauf for evermore.'
They sworen and assenten every man
To lyf with hir and dye, and by hir stonde;
And everich in the beste wise he can
To strengthen hir schal al his frendes fonde.
And sche hath emperise take on honde,
Which ye schul heere that I schal devyse,
And to hem alle sche spak in this wise:
'We schul first feyne ous cristendom to take;[2]
Cold watir schal nat greve us but a lite;
And I schal such a fest and revel make,
That, as I trow, I schal the sowdan quyte.
For though his wyf be cristned never so white,
Sche schal have neede to waissche away the rede,
They sche a font of watir with hir lede.'
O sowdones, root of iniquite
Virago thou Semyram[3] the secounde;
O serpent under feminite,

[1] The Koran was translated into Latin in the twelfth century; and to the intercourse which at this period was kept up between the people of Europe and the Arabs, Mr. Hallam attributes the great, though secret, progress of scepticism, which may be traced in a continually increasing stream through the literature of the middle ages.—HALLAM, *Lit. of the Mid. Ages*, vol. i. c. ii. 64.

[2] To receive baptism.

[3] Alluding to Semiramis murdering her King.

Lyk to the serpent deep in helle i-bounde;
O feyned womman, alle that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in the, as nest of every vice.
O Satan, envyous syn thilke day
That thou were chased fro oure heritage,[1]
Wel knewest thou to wommen the olde way.
Thou madest Eve to bryng us in servage,
Thou wolt fordoon this cristen mariage.
Thyn instrument so (weylaway the while!)
Makestow of wommen whan thou wolt bygyle.
This sowdones, whom I thus blame and wary
Let pryvely hir counseil gon his way;
What schuld I in this tale lenger tary?
Sche rideth to the sowdan on a day,
And seyd him, that sche wold reney hir lay,
And cristendam of prestes handes fonge,
Repentyng hir sche hethen was so longe;
Bysechyng him to doon hir that honour,
That sche most have the cristen men to feste;
'To plesen hem I will do my labour.'
The sowdan seith, 'I wol do at your heste,'
And knelyng, thanketh hir of that requeste;
So glad he was, he nyst nat what to seye.
Sche kyst hir sone, and hom sche goth hir weye.
Arryved ben the cristen folke to londe
In Surry, with a gret solempne route,
And hastily this sowdan sent his sonde,
First to his moder, and al the regne aboute,
And seyd, his wyf was comen out of doute,
And preyeth hir for to ride agein the queene,[2]
The honour of his regne to susteene.
Gret was the prees, and riche was tharray
Of Surriens and Romayns mette in feere.

[1] An allusion to Luke x. 18. 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Also, Rev. xii., and other passages; the sources of the mediæval legend which served as the foundation of *Paradise Lost*.

[2] To meet the Queen.

The mooder of the sowdan riche and gay
Receyved hir with al so glad a cheere,
As eny mooder might hir doughter deere;
And to the nexte citee ther bysyde
A softe paas solempnely thay ryde.
Nought trow I the triumphe of Julius,
Of which that Lukan[1] maketh moche bost,
Was ryaller, ne more curious,
Than was thassemble of this blisful oost.
But this scorpioun, this wikked goost,
The sowdones, for al hir flateryng,
Cast under this ful mortally to styng.
The sowdan comth himself sone after this
So really, that wonder is to telle;
And welcometh hir with al joy and blys.
And thus with mirth and joy I let hem dwelle.
The fruyt of this matier is that I telle.
Whan tyme com, men thought it for the best
That revel stynt, and men goon to her rest.
The tyme com, the olde sowdonesse
Ordeyned hath this fest of which I told;
And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse
In general, bothe yong and old.
Ther men may fest and realte byholde,
And deyntes mo than I can of devyse,
But al to deere they bought it ar they ryse.
[2]O sodeyn wo! that ever art successour
To worldly blis, spreynd is with bitternesse,
The ende of oure joye, of oure worldly labour;
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.
Herken this counseil for thyn sikernesse;
Upon thyn glade dayes have in thi mynde
The unwar woo that cometh ay bihynde.
For schortly for to tellen at o word,
The sowdan and the cristen everichone

[1] Lucan, author of the *Pharsalia*.

[2] This stanza is taken from different passages in Scripture. Prov. xiv. 13; Eccles. xi. 8.

Ben al to-hewe and stiked atte bord,
But it were dame Constaunce allone.
This olde sowdones, this cursed crone,
Hath with hir frendes doon this cursed dede,
For sche hirself wold al the contre lede.
Ne ther was Surrien noon that was converted,
That of the counseil of the sowdon woot,
That he nas al to-hewe or he asterted;
And Constaunce have they take anon foot-hoot,[1]
And in a schippe, stereles, God it woot,
They have hir set, and bad hir lerne to sayle
Out of Surry agein-ward to Ytaile.
A certein tresour that sche thider ladde,
And, soth to sayn, vitaile gret plente,
They have hir geven, and clothes eek sche hadde,
And forth sché sayleth in the salte see.
O my Constaunce, ful of benignite,
O emperoures yonge doughter deere,
He that is Lord of fortun be thi steere!
Sche blesseth hir,[2] and with ful pitous voys
Unto the croys of Crist than seyde sche:
'O cler, O welful auter, holy croys,
Red of the lambes blood, ful of pite,
That wissh the world fro old iniquite,
Me fro the feend and fro his clowes keepe,
That day that I schal drenchen in the deepe.

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[1] With all expedition. Tyrwhitt says that *haut-le-pied* has the same meaning, and, therefore, supposed that *foot-hot* is quasi *foot-haut*. But from the subjoined note in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, it would rather seem to be derived from following an animal of the chase so quickly that the scent of its footsteps is *hot* upon the ground. 'The pursuit of border marauders was followed by the injured party and his friends with blood-hounds and bugle-horn, and was called the *hot-trod*.' The phrase *hot-foot*, signifying the following up any pursuit instantly or quickly, is common among the peasantry of Ireland.

[2] To bless oneself is to make the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast, as an act of faith in the atonement of Christ. It is mentioned by Tertullian, *de Resur. carnis*, by Cyprian, and most of the early Christian writers, as a usual custom in their times before taking anything in hand.

'Victorious tre, proteccioun of trewe,
That oonly were worthy for to bere
The Kyng of Heven, with his woundes newe,
The white Lamb, that hurt was with a spere;
Flemer of feendes, out of him and here
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and gif me might my lyf to menden.'
Yeres and dayes flette this creature
Thurghout the see of Grece, into the strayte
Of Marrok,[1] as it was hir adventure.
O many a sory mele may sche bayte,
After hir deth ful ofte may sche wayte,
Or that the wilde wawe wol hir dryve
Unto the place ther as sche schal arryve.
Men mighten aske, why sche was nought slayn?
Ek at the fest who might hir body save?
And I answer to that demaunde agayn,
Who saved Daniel in thorrible cave,
That every wight, sauf he, mayster or knave,
Was with the lioun frete, or he asterte?
No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.
God lust to schewe his wondurful miracle
In hir, for we schuld seen his mighty werkes;
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certeyn menes ofte, as knowen clerkes,
Doth thing for certeyn ende, that ful derk is
To mannes witt, that for our ignoraunce
Ne can nought knowe his prudent purvyaunce.
Now sith sche was nat at the fest i-slawe,
Who kepte hir fro drenching in the see?
Who kepte Jonas in the fisches mawe,
Til he was spouted up at Ninive?
Wel may men knowe, it was no wight but He
That kept the pepul Ebrayk fro her drenchyng,
With drye feet thurghout the see passyng.

[1] Straits of Gibraltar.

Who badde foure spiritz of tempest,
That power han to noyen land and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
Anoyen neyther londe, seye, ne tree?[1]
Sothly the comaunder of that was He
That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte,
As wel when sche awok as when sche slepte.
Wher might this womman mete and drinke have?
Thre yer and more, how lasteth hir vitaille?
Who fedde the Egipcien Marie[2] in the cave,
Or in desert? no wight but Crist *saunz faile*.
Fyf thousand folk, it was a gret mervaile
With loves fyf and fissches tuo to feede;
God sent his foysoun at her grete neede.
Sche dryveth forth into oure occean
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte last
Under an holte, that nempnen I ne can,
Fer in Northumberland, the wawe hir cast,
And in the sand the schip styked so fast,
That thennes wold it nought in al a tyde;
The wille of Crist was that sche schold abyde.
The constabil of the castel doun is fare
To se this wrak, and al the schip he sought,
And fond this wery womman ful of care;
He fand also the tresour that sche brought;
In hir langage mercy sche bisought,
The lif out of hir body for to twynne,
Hir to delyver of woo that sche was inne.
A maner Latyn corupt[3] was hir speche,
But algates therby sche was understonde.
The constabil, whan him lust no lenger seche,

---

[1] The passages of Scripture here alluded to are Daniel vi., Jonah ii. 11, Exod. xiv., Rev. viii. 2, 3, Matt. xiv.

[2] St. Mary the Egyptian was a prostitute; but, being converted, she fled to the desert, where she lived in solitude for forty-seven years, during which time she was miraculously sustained.—*Legenda Aurea.*

[3] So Boccaccio, in his letter to *la Fiammetta*, quoted by Tyrwhitt, in

This woful womman broughte he to londe.
Sche kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes sonde
But what sche was, sche wolde no man seye
For foul ne faire, though sche scholde deye.
Sche was, sche seyd, so mased in the see,
That sche forgat hir mynde, by hire trowthe.
The constable had of hir so gret pitee,
And eek his wyf, they wepeden for routhe;
Sche was so diligent withouten slouthe
To serve and plese ever in that place,
That alle hir loven that loken on hir face.
The constable and dame Hermegyld[1] his wyf,
To telle you playne, payenes bothe were;[2]
But Hermegyld loved Constance as hir lyf;
And Constance hath so long herberwed there
In orisoun, with many a bitter teere,
Til Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegyld, the constables[3] of the place.
In al the loud no cristen men durst route;
Al cristen men ben fled from that contre
Thurgh payens, that conquered al aboute
The places of the north by land and see.
To Wales fled the cristianite
Of olde Britouns, dwellyng in this yle;
Ther was hir refut for the mene while.
But yit nere cristen Britouns so exiled,
That ther nere some in here pryvite
Honoured Christ, and hethen folk bygiled;[4]

---

his introduction, says that he had translated the story of the *Theseida in Latino volgare*, meaning Italian, which was the vernacular tongue of Constance.

[1] Mr. Wright says that the Saxon is *Eormengild*, which was the name of one of the daughters of Earconbehrt, King of Kent.

[2] Tyrwhitt gives (from other MSS.) instead of this line—

'*Were payenes, and that contree every wher.*'

The Harl. MS. has *in peymes* for *payenes*.—W.

[3] Constabless means the constable's wife, like the French *châtelaine*, the *châtelain's* wife.

[4] This is corroborative of Mr. Ellis's opinion, expressed in the introduction to his *Met. Romances*, sec. ii.—'Upon the whole, though it is

And neigh the castel such ther dwellid thre.
That oon of hem was blynd, and might nat se,
But if it were with eyen of his mynde,
With which men seen after that they ben blynde.
Bright was the sonne, as in someres day,
For which the constable and his wif also
And Constaunce had take the righte way
Toward the see, a forlong wey or two,
To pleyen, and to romen to and fro;
And in that walk this blynde man they mette,
Croked and olde, with eyen fast y-schette.
'In name of Crist,' cryed this old Britoun,
'Dame Hermegyld, gif me my sight ageyn!'[1]
This lady wax affrayed of the soun,
Lest that hir houseband, schortly to sayn,
Wold hir for Jhesu Cristes love have slayn,
Til Constaunce made hir bold, and bad hir werche
The wil of Crist, as doughter of holy chirche.
The constable wax abaisshed of that sight,
And sayde, 'What amounteth al this fare?'
Constaunce answered, 'Sir, it is Cristes might,
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare.'
And so ferforth sche gan hir lay[2] declare,

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certain that the leaders and princes of Britain defended their power with equal valour and obstinacy, it would be very rash to conclude that the whole body of their subjects preferred exile or extermination to a timid and disloyal acquiescence in the government of a foreign invader; or that this invader disdained to derive from the labours of his new subjects either the necessaries of life or those luxuries and useful arts which they had learned from the Romans. In short, all analogy seems to concur with the best evidence, in leading us to believe that the Saxons and Britons of the lowlands were gradually incorporated, like the Franks and Gauls, though, perhaps, in very different proportions, so as to form one people.'

[1] Why the blind man should infer that Dame Hermegyld had the power of working miracles, because she had been converted to Christianity, is not clear. Perhaps he is supposed to be seized with a supernatural impulse, sent expressly in order that the constable might be converted by the miracle.

[2] Her law, *scil.*, the Gospel, called the new law, as the Mosaic was called the old.

That sche the constable, er that it was eve
Converted, and on Crist made him bileve.
This constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speke, thr he Constance fond,
But kept it strongly many a wynter space
Under Alla,[1] kyng of Northumberlond,
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond,
Agein the Scottes, as men may wel heere.
But tourne agein I wil to my mateere.
Satan, that ever us wayteth to begile,
Sawe of Constaunce al hir perfeccioun,
And cast anoon how he might quyt hir while;
And made a yong knight, that dwelt in the toun,
Love hir so hoot of foul affeccioun,
That verrayly him thought he schulde spille,
But he of hire oones had his wille.
He wowith hir, but it avayleth nought,
Sche wolde do no synne by no weye;
And for despyt, he compassed in his thought
To maken hir a schamful deth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,
And pryvyly upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermyngyldes chambre whil sche slepte.
Wery, for-waked in here orisoun,
Slepeth Constaunce, and Hermyngyld also.
This knight, thurgh Satanas temptacioun,
Al softely is to the bed y-go,
And kutte the throte of Hermegild a-two,
And leyd the bloody knyf by dame Constaunce,
And went his way, ther God geve him meschaunce.
Sone after comth this constable hom agayn,
And eek Alla, that kyng was of that lond,
And say his wyf dispitously i-slayn,

[1] This is the king whose name gave occasion to one of Pope Gregory the Great's well-known string of puns. When told that the name of the king who reigned in Northumberland was Ella or Alla, he said he trusted that not Alla, but Alleluia, would soon be sung in his dominions.

For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the blody knyf he fond
By dame Custaunce: allas! what might she say?
For verray woo hir witt was al away.
To king Alla was told al this meschaunce,
And eek the tyme, and wher, and in what wyse
That in a schip was founden this Constaunce,
As here bifore ye have herd me devyse.
The kinges hert of pite gan agrise,
Whan he saugh so benigne a creature
Falle in disese and in mysaventure.
For as the lomb toward his deth is brought,
So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.
This false knight, that hath this tresoun wrought,
Bereth hir an hand that sche hath don this thing;
But nevertheles ther was gret murmuryng
Among the poeple, and seyn they can not gesse
That sche had doon so gret a wikkednesse.
For they han seyen hir so vertuous,
And lovyng Hermegyld right as hir lyf;
Of this bar witnesse everich in that hous,
Save he that Hermegyld slowgh with his knyf.
This gentil kyng hath caught a gret motyf[1]
Of his witnesse, and thought he wold enquere
Depper in this cas, a trouthe to lere.
Allas! Constaunce, thou ne has no champioun,
No fighte canstow nat, so welaway!
But He that for oure redempcioun
Bonde Sathan, that[2] yit lith ther he lay,
So be thy stronge champioun this day;
For but Crist upon the miracle kythe,
Withouten gilt thou schalt be slayn as swithe.
Sche set hir doun on knees, and than sche sayde,
'Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Frò false blame; and thou, mercyful mayde,

[1] Suspicion.
[2] *And* in Harl. MS., apparently a clerical error.

Mary I mene, doughter of seint Anne,
Bifore whos child aungeles syng Osanne;
If I be gultles of thi$ felonye,
My socour be, for el'ɜs schal I dye!'
Have ye not seye som tyme a pale face,
Among a prees, of him that hath be lad
Toward his deth, wher him geyneth no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighte knowe his face was so bystad,
Among alle the faces in that route;
So stant Constance, and loketh hire about.
O queenes lyvyng in prosperite,
Duchesses, and ye ladies everychon,
Haveth som reuthe on her adversite;
An emperoures doughter stond allon;
Sche nath no wight to whom to make hir moon;
O blod ryal, that stondest in this drede,
Ferre be thy frendes at thy grete neede!
This Alla kyng hath such compassioun,
As gentil hert is fulfild of pite,
That from his eyen ran the water doun.
'Now hastily do fech a book,' quod he;
'And if this knight wil swere how that sche
This womman slowgh, yet wol we us avyse,
Whom that we wille schal be oure justise.'
A Britoun[1] book, i-write with Evaungiles,
Was fette, and on this book he swor anoon
Sche gultif was; and in the mene whiles
An hond him smot upon the nekke boon,
That doun he fel anon right as a stoon;
And bothe his yen brast out of his face,
In sight of every body in that place.
A vois was herd, in general audience,
And seid, 'Thou hast disclaundred gulteles
The doughter of holy chirche in hire presence;

[1] See *ante*, p. 24, note 4.

Thus hastow doon, and yit I holde my pees?'[1]
Of this mervaile agast was al the prees,
As mased folk they stooden everychon
For drede of wreche, save Custaunce allon.
Gret was the drede and eek the repentaunce
Of hem that hadden wrong suspecciouu
Upon the sely innocent Custaunce;
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
And by Custaunces mediacioun,
The kyng, and many other in the place,
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!
This false knight was slayn for his untrouthe
By juggement of Alla hastyly;
And yit Custaunce hath of his deth gret routhe.
And after this Jhesus of his mercy
Made Alla wedde ful solempnely
This holy mayde, that is bright and schene,
And thus hath Crist i-maad Constance a queene.
But who was woful, if I schal not lye,
Of this weddyng but Domegild and no mo,
The kynges mooder, ful of tyrannye?
Hir thought hir cursed herte brast a-two;
Sche wolde nat hir sone had i-do so;
Hir thought despyte, that he schulde take
So straunge a creature unto his make.
Me lust not of the caf ne of the stree
Make so long a tale, as of the corn.
What schuld I telle of the realte
Of this mariage, or which cours goth biforn,
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
The fruyt[2] of every tale is for to seye;
They ete and drynk, and daunce and synge and pleye.
They gon to bed, as it was skile and right;
For though that wyfes ben ful holy thinges,
They moste take in pacience a-night

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[1] Interrogative—Shall I hold my peace?
[2] It is the fruit or kernel of a tale that ought to be told; a rule which

Such maner necessaries as ben plesynges
To folk that han i-wedded hem with rynges,
And halvendel her holynesse ley aside
As for the tyme, it may non other betyde.
On hire he gat a knave child anoon,
And to a bisschope, and to his constable eeke,
He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is goon
To Scotlond-ward, his foomen for to seeke.
Now faire Custaunce, that is so humble and meeke,
So long is goon with childe til that stille
Sche held hir chambre, abidyng Goddes wille.
The tyme is come, a knave childe sche bere;
Mauricius atte funstone[1] men him calle.
This constabil doth come forth a messager,
And wrot to his kyng that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tydyng is bifalle,
And other thinges spedful for to seye.
He taketh the lettre, and forth he goth his weye.
This messanger, to doon his avauntage,
Unto the kynges moder he goth ful swithe,
And salueth hire fair in his langage.
'Madame,' quod he, 'ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanke God an hundred thousand sithe;
My lady queen hath child, withouten doute
To joye and blis of al the reame aboute.
'Lo heer the lettres sealed of this thing,
That I mot bere with al the hast I may;
If ye wole ought unto youre sone the kyng,
I am youre servaunt bothe night and day.'
Doungyld answerde, 'As now this tyme, nay;
But here al nyght I wol thou take thy rest,
To morwen I wil say the what me lest.'

Chaucer, unlike his contemporaries, who are intolerably tedious, has followed in *The Canterbury Tales*, though not in all his works.

[1] At the font-stone, at his baptism. The Harleian MS., by a mistake of the scribe, reads *Maurius* for *Mauricius*.

This messanger drank sadly ale and wyn,
And stolen were his lettres pryvely
Out of his box, whil he slept as a swyn;
And countrefeet they were subtily;
Another sche him wroot ful synfully,
Unto the kyng direct of this matiere
Fro his constable, as ye schul after heere.

The lettre spak, the queen delyvered was
Of so orryble and feendly creature,
That in the castel noon so hardy was
That eny while dorste therin endure;
The mooder was an elf[1] by aventure
Bycome by charmes or by sorcerie,
And every man hatith hir companye.

Wo was this kyng whan he this letter had sein,
But to no wight he told his sorwes sore,
But of his owen hand he wrot agayn:
'Welcome the sond of Crist[2] for everemore
To me, that am now lerned in this lore;
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy pleasaunce!
My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.

'Kepeth this child, al be it foul or fair,
And eek my wyf, unto myn hom comyng;
Crist whan him lust may sende me an hair
More agreable than this to my likyng.'
This lettre he seleth, pryvyly wepyng,

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[1] In the introduction to the ballad of *Tamlane*, in the *Border Minstrelsy*, is an interesting quotation from Einar Gudmund, a learned Icelander, very much to the present purpose:—'I am firmly of opinion,' he says, 'that these beings (the elves) are creatures of God, consisting, like human beings, of a body and rational soul; that they are of different sexes, and capable of producing children, and subject to all human affections.' . . . He proceeds to state that the females of this race are capable of procreating with mankind, and gives an account of one who bore a child to an inhabitant of Iceland, for whom she claimed the privilege of baptism; depositing the infant for that purpose at the gate of the churchyard, together with a goblet of gold, as an offering. —*Historia Ilrolfi Krakœ, a Torfæo.*

[2] Welcome what Christ sends.

Which to the messager he took ful sone,
And forth he goth, ther nys no more to done.
O messager, fulfild of dronkenesse,[1]
Strong is thy bretl, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou bywreyest alle sykernesse;
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is torned al in a newe array;
Ther drunkenesse regneth in eny route,
Ther is no counseil hid, withouten doute.
O Domegyld, I have non Englisch digne
Unto thy malice and thy tyrannye;
And therfor to the feend I the resigne,
Let him endyten of thi treccherie.
Fy, mannyssch, fy!—o nay, by God, I lye;
Fy, feendly spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.
This messanger comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kinges modres court he light,
And sche was of this messenger ful fayn,
And pleseth him in al that ever sche might.
He drank, and wel his gurdel underpight;
He slepeth, and he fareth in his gyse
Al nyght, unto the sonne gan arise.
Eft were his lettres stolen everichon,
And countrefeted lettres in this wise:
'The kyng comaundeth his constable anon,
Up peyne of hangyng and of heigh justise,
That he ne schulde suffre in no maner wyse
Constaunce in his regne for to abyde
Thre dayes, and a quarter of a tyde;
But in the same schip as he hir fond,
Hire and hir yonge sone, and al hire gere,

---

[1] Tyrwhitt gives in his notes from the margin of the MS. C. the following, from whence this stanza is taken:—'Quid turpius ebrioso, cui fœtor in ore, tremor in corpore, qui promit stulta, prodit occulta; cui mens alienatur, facies transformatur? Nullum enim latet secretum ubi regnat ebrietas.'

He schulde putte, and crowde[1] fro the londe,
And charge hire that sche never eft come there.'
O my Constaunce, wel may thy goost may fere,
And slepyng in thy drem ben in penaunce,
Whan Domegyld cast al this ordynaunce.
This messanger a-morwe, whan he awook,
Unto the castel held the nexte way;
And to the constable he the lettre took;
And whan that he the pitous lettre say,
Ful ofte he seyd allas and welaway;
'Lord Crist,' quod he, 'how may this world endure?
So ful of synne is many a creature!
O mighty God, if that it be thy wille,
Seth thou art rightful jugge, how may this be
That thou wolt suffre innocentz to spille,
And wikked folk regne in prosperite?
O good Constance, allas! so wo is me,
That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
On schamful deth, ther is non other weye.'
Wepen bothe yong and olde in al that place,
Whan that the kyng this corsed lettre sent;
And Constance with a dedly pale face
The fourthe[2] day toward hir schip sche went.
But nevertheles sche taketh in good entent
The wil of Christ, and knelyng on the grounde
Sche sayde, 'Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!
He that me kepte fro the false blame,
Whil I wos on the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe from harm and eek fro schame
In the salt see, although I se nat how;
As strong as ever he was, he is right now,
In him trust I, and in his mooder deere,
That is to me my sayl and eek my steere.'

---

[1] To push. It is still usual in Norfolk and Suffolk to speak of *crowding* a wheelbarrow.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *fayre*. The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt.

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelyng pitously to him sche sayde:
'Pees, litle sone, I wol do the noon harm.'
With that hir kercheef of hir hed sche brayde,
And over his litel eyghen sche it layde,
And in hir arm sche lullith it wel faste,
And unto heven hir eyghen up sche caste.

'Moder,' quod sche, 'and mayde bright, Marie,
Soth is, that thurgh wommannes eggement
Mankynde was lorn and dampned ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a cros to-rent;
Thyn blisful eyghen sawh al this torment;[1]
Then nys ther noon comparisoun bitwene
Thy wo, and any woo may man sustene.

'Thow saugh thy child i-slaw byfor thyn yen,
And yit now lyveth my litel child, parfay;
Now, lady bright, to whom alle woful cryen,
Thou glory of wommanhod, thou faire may,
Thou heven of refute, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thyn gentilnesse
Rewest on every synful in destresse.

'O litel child, alas! what is thi gilt,
That never wroughtest synne as yet, parde?
Why wil thyn harde fader han the spilt?
O mercy, deere constable,' seyde sche,
'And let my litel child here dwelle with the;
And if thou darst not saven him for blame,[2]
So kys him oones in his fadres name.'

---

[1] The griefs of the blessed Virgin afforded to the poets of the early Church a favourite theme for appeals to the feelings, as in the well-known hymn (*Septem Dolorum B. V. Mariæ*), attributed to Innocent III., which is not unlike the passage in the text:—

'Pro peccatis suæ gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.
Vidit suum dulcem natum
Moriendo desolatum
Dum emisit spiritum.'

[2] For fear of blame.

Therwith sche loketh bak-ward to the lond,
And seyde, 'Farwel, housbond rewtheles!'
And up sche rist, and walweth doun the stronde
Toward the schip, hir folweth al the prees;
And ever sche preyeth hir child to hold his pees,
And took hir leve, and with an holy entent
Sche blesseth[1] hire, and to the schip sche went.
Vytailled was the schip, it is no drede,
Abundauntly for hire a ful longe space;
And other necessaries that schulde nede
Sche had ynowgh, heryed be Cristez grace;
For wynd and water almighty God purchace,[2]
And bryng hir hom, I can no bettre say,
But in the see sche dryveth forth hir way.
Alla the kyng cometh hom soon after this
Unto the castel, of the which I tolde,
And asketh wher his wyf and his child ys.
The constable gan aboute his herte colde,
And playnly al the maner he him tolde
As ye han herd, I can telle it no better,
And schewed the kynges seal and his letter;
And seyde, 'Lord, as ye comaunded me
Up peyne of deth, so have I do certayn.'
This messager tormented[3] was, til he
Moste biknowe and telle it plat and playn,
Fro nyght to night in what place he had layn;
And thus by witt and subtil enqueryng
Ymagined was by wham this gan to spryng.
The hand was knowen that the lettre wroot,
And al the venym of this cursed dede;
But in what wyse, certeynly I noot.
Theffect is this, that Alla, out of drede,[4]
His moder slough, as men may pleynly reede,

[1] See *ante*, p. 21, note 2.

[2] This means, May Almighty God take the wind and water into his especial possession or governance.

[3] Examined by torture to make him discover his guilt.

[4] This is an idiomatic expression of usual occurrence. There is no fear but that Ella slew his mother,—*i. e.*, *you may be sure* he did.

For that sche traytour was to hir ligeaunce.
Thus endeth olde Domegild with meschaunce.
The sorwe that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wyf and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.
But now I wol unto Custaunce go,
That fleeteth in the see in peyne and wo
Fyve yeer and more, as liked Cristes sonde,
Er that hir schip approched unto londe.
Under an hethen castel atte last,
Of which the name in my text nought I fynde,
Constaunce and eek hir child the see upcast.
Almighty God, that saveth al mankynde,
Have on Constaunce and on hir child som mynde!
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsone.
In poynt to spille, as I schal telle you soone.
Doun fro the castel cometh many a wight,
To gawren on this schip, and on Constaunce;
But schortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes styward, God give him meschaunce!
A theef that had reueyed oure creaunce,
Com into schip alone, and seyd he scholde
Hir lemman be, whethir sche wold or nolde.
Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigoon,[1]
Hire childe crieth and sche pytously;
But blisful Mary hilp hir right anoon,
For with hir stroglyng[2] wel and mightily
The theef fel over-boord al sodeinly,
And in the see he drenched for vengeaunce,
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Constaunce.
O foule luste, O luxurie, lo thin ende![3]
Nought oonly that thou feyntest mannes mynde,
But verrayly thou wolt his body schende.

---

1 This wretched woman was woe begone, far gone in woe.

2 The Harl. MS. reads *strengthe*.

3 In the margin of the MS. C. i. is the following:—'O extrema libidinis turpitudo, quæ non solum mentem effeminat, set etiam corpus enervat: semper secuntur dolor et pœnitentia.'

The ende of thyn werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynyng; how many may men fynde,
That nought for werk som tyme, but for thentent
To doon this synne, ben eyther slayn or schent!
How may this weyke womman han the strengthe
Hir to defende agein this rengat?
O Golias, unmesurable of lengthe,
How mighte David make the so mate?
So yong, and of armure so desolate,
How dorst he loke upon thyn dredful face?
Wel may men seyn, it nas but Goddes grace.
Who gaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To slen him Olefernes in his tent,
And to delyveren out of wrecchednes
The peple of God? I say in this entent,
That right as God spiryte and vigor sent
To hem, and saved hem out of meschaunce,
So sent he might and vigor to Constaunce.
Forth goth hir schip thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubalter and Septe,[1] dryvyng alway,
Som tyme west, and some tyme north and south,
And som tyme est, ful many a wery day;
Til Cristes mooder, blessed be sche ay!
Hath schapen thurgh hir endeles goodnesse
To make an ende of hir hevynesse.
Now let us stynt of Constaunce but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romayn emperour,
That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and deshonour
Doon to his doughter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed wikked sowdenesse,
That at the fest leet slee bothe more and lesse.
For which this emperour hath sent anoon
His senatours, with real ordynaunce,
And other lordes, God wot, many oon,

[1] Jubalter, of course, means Gibraltar. Ceuta, on the opposite coast of Africa, was formerly called *Septa*.

On Surriens to take high vengeaunce.
They brenne, sleen, and bringen hem to meschaunce
Ful many a day; but schortly this is thende,
Hom-ward to Rome they schapen hem to wende.
This senatour repayreth with victorie
To Rome-ward, saylyng ful really,
And mette the schip dryvyng, as seth the story,
In which Constance sitteth ful pitously.
Nothing ne knew he what sche was ne why
Sche was in such aray, sche nolde seye
Of hire astaat, although sche scholde deye.
He bryngeth hir to Rome, and to his wyf
He gaf hir, and hir yonge sone also;
And with the senatour lad sche hir lyf.
Thus can our lady bryngen out of woo
Woful Constaunce and many another moo;
And longe tyme dwelled sche in that place,
In holy werkes, as ever was hir grace.
The senatoures wif hir aunte was,
But for al that sche knew hir never more:
I wol no lenger taryen in this cas,
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yore,
That for his wyf wepeth and siketh sore,
I wol retorne, and lete I wol Constaunce
Under the senatoures governaunce.
Kyng Alla, which that had his mooder slayn,
Upon a day fel in such repentaunce,
That, if I schortly telle schal and playn,
To Rome[1] he cometh to receyve his penaunce,
And putte him in the popes ordynaunce
In heigh and lowe, and Jhesu Crist bysought,
Forgef his wikked werkes that he wrought,
The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born,

[1] There are many examples of Saxon kings relinquishing their dignities, and retiring to Rome, or ending their days in monastic seclusion. Among others, Cœlwulf, King of Northumberland, to whom Bede dedicated his history, abdicated the throne about the year 738, and retired to Holy Island, where he died.

How Alla kyng schal come in pilgrymage,
By herberjourz that wenten him biforn,
For which the senatour, as was usage,
Rood him agein,[1] and many of his lynage,
As wel to schewen his magnificence,
As to doon eny kyng a reverence.
Gret cheere doth this noble senatour
To kyng Alla, and he to him also;
Everich of hem doth other gret honour,
And so bifel, that in a day or two
This senatour is to kyng Alla go
To fest, and schortly, if I schal not lye,
Constances sone went in his companye.
Som men wold seyn at request of Custaunce
This senatour hath lad this child to feste;
I may not telle every circumstaunce,
Be as be may, ther was he atte leste;
But soth it is, right at his modres heste,
Byforn hem alle, duryng the metes space,
The child stood lokyng in the kynges face.
This Alla kyng hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the senatour he seyd anoon,
'Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?'
'I not,' quod he, 'by God and by seynt Jon!
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
That I of woot:' and schortly in a stounde
He told Alla how that this child was founde.
'But God woot,' quod this senatour also,
'So vertuous a lyver in my lyf
Ne saugh I never, such as sche, nomo
Of worldly womman, mayden, or of wyf;
I dar wel say sche hadde lever a knyf
Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke,
Ther is no man can bryng hir to that prikke.'[2]

---

[1] Rode to meet him.

[2] To that point, i. e., can blame her in that respect.

Now was this child as lik unto Custaunce
As possible is a creature to be.
This Alla hath the face in remembraunce
Of dame Custaunce, and thereon mused he,
If that the childes mooder were ought[1] sche
That is his wyf; and pryvely he hight,
And sped him fro the table that he might.

'Parfay!' thought he, 'fantom is in myn heed;
I ought to deme, of rightful juggement,
That in the salte see my wyf is deed.'
And after-ward he made this argument:
'What woot I, wher Crist hath hider sent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sent
To my contré, fro thennes that sche went?'

And after noon home with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chaunce.
This senatour doth Alla gret honour,
And hastely he sent after Custaunce.
But trusteth wel, hir luste nat to daunce,
Whan that sche wiste wherfor was that sonde,
Unnethes on hir feet sche mighte stonde.

Whan Alla saugh his wyf, fayre he hir grette,
And wepte, that it was rewthe to se;
For at the firste look he on hir sette
He knew wel verrely that it was sche.
And for sorwe, as domb sche stant as tre;
So was hire herte schett[2] in hir distresse,
Whan sche remembred his unkyndenesse.

Twies sche swowned in his owen sight;
He wept and him excuseth pitously;
'Now God,' quod he, 'and alle his halwes bright
So wisly on my soule have mercy,
That of youre harm as gulteles am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face,
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place.'

---

[1] If the child's mother were *by any chance* she, &c.

[2] A beautiful phrase, expressive of the painful inability to speak or weep in violent grief, particularly if caused by unkindness.

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
Or that here woful herte mighte cesse;
Gret was the pite for to here hem pleyne,
Thurgh whiche playntz gan here wo encresse.
I pray you alle my labour to relesse,
I may not telle al here woo unto morwe,
I am so wery for to speke of the sorwe.

But fynally, whan that the soth is wist,
That Alla gilteles was of hir woo,
I trowe an hundred tymes they ben kist,
And such a blys is ther bitwix hem tuo,
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
Ther is noon lyk, that eny creatûrè
Hath seyn or schal, whil that the world may dure.

Tho prayde sche hir housbond meekely
In the relees of hir pytous pyne,
That he wold preye hir fader specially,
That of his majeste he wold enclyne
To vouchesauf som tyme with him to dyne.
Sche preyeth him eek, he schulde by no weye
Unto hir fader no word of hir seye.

Som men wold seye,[1] that hir child Maurice
Doth his message unto the emperour;
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce,[2]
To him that is so soverayn of honour,
As he that is of Cristes folk the flour,
Sent eny child; but it is best to deeme
He went himsilf, and so it may wel seme.

This emperour hath graunted gentilly
To comè to dyner, as he him bysought;
And wel rede I, he loked besily
Upon the child, and on his doughter thought.
Alla goth to his in, and as him ought
Arrayed for this fest in every wyse,
As ferforth as his connyng may suffise.

[1] Tyrwhitt supposés that this refers to Gower's version of the story; but it alludes, more probably, to some romance which was the common original of both.

[2] *Nyce* is here used in the sense of *niais*, foolish.

The morwe cam, and Alla gan him dresse,
And eek his wyf, the emperour for to meete;
And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse,
And whan sche saugh hir fader in the streete,
Sche light adoun and falleth him to feete.
'Fader,' quod sche, 'your yonge child Constance
Is now ful clene out of your remembraunce.
'I am your doughter Custaunce,' quod sche,
'That whilom ye have sent unto Surrye;
It am I, fader, that in the salte see
Was put alloon, and dampned for to dye.
Now, goode fader, mercy I you crye,
Send me no more unto noon hethenesse,
But thanke my lord her of his kyndenesse.'
Who can the pytous joye telle al
Bitwix hem thre, sith they be thus i-mette?
But of my tale make an ende I schal;
The day goth fast, I wol no lenger lette.
This glade folk to dyner they ben sette;
In joye and blys at mete I let hem dwelle,
A thousand fold wel more than I can telle.
This child Maurice was siththen emperour
I-maad by the pope, and lyved cristenly,
To Cristes chirche dede he gret honour.
But I let al his story passen by,
Of Custaunce is my tale specially;
In olde Romayn gestes men may fynd
Maurices lyf, I bere it nought in mynde.
This kyng Alla whan he his tyme say,
With his Constaunce, his holy wyf so swete,
To Engelond they com the righte way.
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quyete.
But litel whil it last, I you biheete,
Joy of this world for tyme wol not abyde,
Fro day to night it chaungeth as the tyde.[1]

[1] In margin of MS. C. i., 'A mane usque ad vesperam mutabitur tempus; tenent tympanum et gaudent ad sonum organi,' &c.

Who lyved ever in such delyt a day,[1]
That him ne meved eyther his conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som maner affray,
Envy, or pride, or passioun, or offence?
I ne say but for this ende this sentence,
That litel whil in joye or in plesaunce
Lasteth the blis of Alla with Custaunce.

For deth, that takth of heigh and low his rent,
Whan passed was a yeere, as I gesse,
Out of this worlde kyng Alla he hent,
For whom Custauns hath ful gret hevynesse.
Now let us pray that God his soule blesse!
And dame Custaunce, fynally to say,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir way.

To Rome is come this nobil creature,
And fynt hir freendes ther bothe hool and sound;
Now is sche skaped al hir aventure.
And whanne sche her fader had i-founde,
Doun on hir knees falleth sche to grounde,
Wepyng for tendirnes in herte blithe
Sche heried God an hundred thousand sithe.

In vertu and in holy almes-dede
They lyven alle, and never asondre wende;
Til deth departe hem, this lyf they lede.
And far now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jhesu Crist, that of his might may sende
Joy after wo, governe us in his grace,
And keep ous alle that ben in this place.[2]

---

[1] In margin of MS. C. i., 'Quis unquam unam diem totam in sua dilectione duxit jocundam? Quem in aliquâ parte diei reatus conscientiæ, vel impetus iræ, vel motus concupiscentiæ non turbavit,' &c.

[2] In some of the MSS. *The Marchaundes Tale* follows that of *The Man of Lawe*. The Harl. MS. erroneously places the *Prologe to the Shipman's Tale* before *The Wyf of Bathes Prologe*; to which latter there are the following four introductory lines in the Lansd. MS.:—

'Than schortly answarde the wife of Bathe,
And swore a wonder grete hathe.
'Be Goddes bones, I will tel next,
I will not glose, but saye the text.
Experiment, though none auctorite,'' &c.

THE PROLOGE OF THE WYF OF BATHE.[1]

EXPERIENS, though noon auctorite
Were in this world, it were ynough for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage;
For, lordyngs, syns I twelf yer was of age,
I thank it God that is eterne on lyve,
Housbondes atte chirch dore I have had fyve,[2]
For I so ofte might have weddid be,
And alle were worthy men in here degre.
But me was taught, nought longe tyme goon is,
That synnes Crist went never but onys
To weddyng, in the Cane of Galile,
That by the same ensampul taught he me
That I ne weddid schulde be but ones.
Lo, herken such a scharp word for the nones!
Biside a welle Jhesus, God and man,
Spak in reproof of the Samaritan:
'Thou hast y-had fyve housbondes,' quod he;
'And that ilk-man, which that now hath the,
Is nought thin housbond;' thus he sayd certayn;
What that he ment therby, I can not sayn.
But that I axe, why the fyfte man
Was nought housbond to the Samaritan?
How many might sche have in mariage?
Yit herd I never tellen in myn age

---

[1] It appears that the *Wyf of Bathe's Prologe* was a kind of composition often recited by the minstrels or *contours*. Erasmus, in his *Ecclesiastes*, speaking of such preachers as imitated the tone of beggars or mountebanks, says, 'Apud Anglos,' &c. 'Among the English is a kind of men like those called in Italy *circulatores*, who intrude themselves into the feasts of persons of rank, or into wine-shops, and recite some discourse which they have learned by heart, such as *that death is supreme over all*, or *a praise of matrimony*.' But though Chaucer has adopted a subject and mode of composition which were probably already popular, his treatment of it, for wit and humour, ease and knowledge of human nature, is to be equalled only by the delineations of Shakespeare.

[2] See vol. i., p. 97, note 1.

Uppon this noumbre diffinicioun.
Men may divine and glosen up and doun;
But wel I wot, withouten eny lye,
God bad us for to wax and multiplie;
That gentil tixt can I wel understonde.
Ek wel I wot, he sayd, myn housebonde
Schuld lete fader and moder, and folwe me;
But of no noumber mencioun made he,
Of bygamye or of octogamye;[1]
Why schuld men speken of that vilonye?
Lo hier the wise kyng daun Salomon,
I trow he hadde wifes mo than oon,
As wold God it were leful unto me
To be refreisshed half so oft as he!
Which gift of God had he for alle his wyvys?
No man hath such, that in the world on lyve is.
God wot, this nobil king, as to my wit,
The firste night had many a mery fit
With ech of hem, so wel was him on lyve.
I-blessid be God that I have weddid fyve![2]
Welcome the sixte whan that ever he schal!
For sothe I nyl not kepe me chast in al;
Whan myn housbond is fro the world i-gon,
Som cristne man schal wedde me anoon,
For than thapostil[3] saith that I am fre
To wedde, a goddis haf, wher so it be.
He saith, that to be weddid is no synne;
Bet is to be weddid than to brynne.[4]

---

[1] Bigamy, according to the canonists, consisted (not only in marrying two wives at a time, but) in marrying two spinsters successively, or a widow at all, and was supposed to argue passions so unrestrained as to incapacitate the bigamist for ever from receiving holy orders, in accordance with 1 Tim. iii. 2, as they understood it.

[2] The second Camb. MS. collated by Mr. Wright, several MSS. quoted by Tyrwhitt, and the printed editions, after this verse, read:—

'Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,
Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.'

[3] Rom. vii. 3.

[4] 1 Cor. vii. 9.

What recchith me what folk sayn viloyne
Of schrewith Lameth, and of his bigamye?[1]
I wot wel Abram was an holy man,
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I can,
And ech of hem had wyves mo than tuo,
And many another holy man also.
Whan sawe ye in eny maner age
That highe God defendid[2] mariage
By expres word? I pray you tellith me;
Or wher commaunded he virginite?
I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
Thapostil, whan he spekth of maydenhede,
He sayd, that precept therof had he noon;[3]
Men may counseil a womman to be oon,
But counselyng nys no comaundement;
He put it in our owne juggement.
For hadde God comaundid maydenhede,
Than had he dampnyd weddyng with the dede;
And certes, if ther were no seed i-sowe,
Virginite whereon schuld it growe?
Poul ne dorst not comaunde atte lest
A thing, of which his maister gaf non hest.
The dart[4] is set upon virginite,
Cach who so may, who rennith best let se.
But this word is not taken of every wight,
But ther as God list give it of his might.
I wot wel that thapostil was a mayde,
But natheles, though that he wrot or sayde,

---

[1] Gen. iv. There runs through the whole of this doctrine about bigamy a confusion between marrying twice and having two wives at once. All that is said in Scripture about bigamy in the latter sense, is applied to it in the former.

[2] Like the French *defendre*, to forbid.

[3] 1 Cor. vii. 6.

[4] A dart or spear was a usual prize for running, as in Lydgate—

'And oft it happeneth he that best rŏn
Doth not *the spere* like his desert possede.'

The meaning of the text is:—A great reward is indeed promised to virginity; it is one of the *counsels of perfection;* but it is not commanded, all have not a vocation for it. The allusion is to Matt. xix., and 1 Cor. vii.

He wolde that every wight were such as he,
Al nys but counseil unto virginite.
And for to ben a wyf he gaf me leve,
Of indulgence, so nys it to repreve
To wedde me, if that my make deye,
Withoute excepcioun of bigamye;
Al were it good no womman for to touche,
(He mente in his bed or in his couche)
For peril is bothe fuyr and tow to assemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample wold resemble.
This is al and som, he holdith virginite
More parfit than weddying in frelte;
(Frelte clepe I, but if that he and sche
Wold leden al ther lif in chastite).
I graunt it wel, I have noon envye,
Though maidenhede preferre[1] bygamye;
It liketh hem to be clene in body and gost;
Of myn estate I nyl make no bost.
For wel ye wot, a lord in his household
He nath not every vessel ful of gold;[2]
Som ben of tre, and don her lord servise.
God clepth folk to him in sondry wise,
And every hath of God a propre gifte,
Som this, som that, as him likith to schifte.
Virginite is gret perfeccioun,[3]
And continens eek with gret devocioun;
But Christ, that of perfeccioun is welle,
Bad nought every wight schuld go and selle
Al that he had, and give it to the pore,
And in such wise folwe him and his lore.[4]
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfytly,
And, lordyngs, by your leve, that am not I;
I wol bystowe the flour of myn age
In the actes and in the fruytes of mariage.
Tel me also, to what conclusioun

[1] *Prefer* seems to be a neuter verb, signifying *be better than*.
[2] 2 Tim ii. 20. [3] Matt. xix. 21.
[4] Harl. MS. reads *fore*, which is probably a mere clerical error. The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt.

Were membres maad of generacioun,
And of so parfit wise[1] a wight y-wrought?
Trustith right wel, thay were nought maad for nought.
Glose who so wol, and saye bothe up and doun,
That they were made for purgacioun,
Oure bothe uryn, and thinges smale,
Were eek to knowe a femel fro a male;
And for non other cause? say ye no?
Thexperiens wot wel it is not so.
So that these clerkes ben not with me wrothe,
I say this, that thay makid ben for bothe,
This is to say, for office and for ease
Of engendrure, ther we God nought displease.
Why schuld men elles in her bokes sette,
That man schal yelde to his wif his dette;
Now wherwith schuld he make his payement,
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Than were thay maad upon a creature
To purge uryn, and eek for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is holde,
That hath such harneys as I to you tolde,
To gon and usen hem in engendrure;
Than schuld men take of chastite no cure.
Crist was a mayde, and schapen as a man,
And many a seynt, sin that the world bygan,
Yet lyved thay ever in parfyt chastite.
I nyl envye no virginite.
Let hem be bred of pured whete seed,
And let us wyves eten barly breed.
And yet with barly bred, men telle can,
Oure Lord Jhesu refreisschid many a man.
In such astaat as God hath cleped ous
I wil persever, I am not precious;
In wyfhode I wil use myn instrument
Als frely as my maker hath me it sent.
If I be daungerous, God give me sorwe,
Myn housbond schal han it at eve and morwe,

[1] The Harl. MS. reads, *And in what wise.* Some MSS. read *and why*, instead of *a wight.*—W.

Whan that him list com forth and pay his dette.
An housbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which schal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his fleissch, whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power duryng al my lif
Upon his propre body, and not he;
Right thus thapostil[1] told it unto me.
And bad oure housbondes for to love us wel;
Al this sentence me likith every del.'
Up start the pardoner, and that anoon;
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'by God and by seint Jon.
Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas.
I was aboute to wedde a wif, allaas!
What? schal I buy it on my fleisch so deere?
Yit had I lever wedde no wyf to yere!'
'Abyd,' quod sche, 'my tale is not bygonne.
Nay, thou schalt drinke of another tonne
Er that I go, schal savere wors than ale.
And whan that I have told the forth my tale
Of tribulacioun in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,
This is to say, myself hath ben the whippe;
Than might thou chese whethir thou wilt sippe
Of thilke tonne, that I schal abroche.
Be war of it, er thou to neigh approche.
For I schal telle ensamples mo than ten:
Who so that nyl be war by other men
By him schal other men corrected be.
The same wordes writes Ptholome,[2]

[1] Ephes. v. 25. It is difficult to reconcile the account which our historians give of the ignorance of Scripture prevailing in the middle ages, with the fact that almost all the writings of those times which have come down to us are filled with allusions to the sacred writings, upon the Hebraisms of which, indeed, their barbarous Latin is founded, just as the peculiar phraseology of the Puritans is derived from the English translation of the Bible.

[2] In the margin of MS., c. i., is the following quotation:—'Qui per alios non corrigitur, alii per ipsum corrigentur.' But I cannot find any such passage in the *Almageste*.—T.

Rede in his Almagest, and tak it there.'
'Dame, I wold pray you, if that youre wille were,'
Sayde this pardoner, 'as ye bigan,
Tel forth youre tale, and sparith for no man,
Teche us yonge men of your practike.'
'Gladly,' quod sche, 'syns it may yow like.
But that I pray to al this companye,
If that I speke after my fantasie,
As taketh nought agreef of that I say,
For myn entente is nought but to play.
'Now, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
I schal say soth of housbondes that I hadde,
As thre of hem were goode, and tuo were badde.
Tuo of hem were goode, riche, and olde;
Unnethes mighte thay the statute holde,
In which that thay were bounden unto me;
Ye wot wel what I mene of this pardé!
As help me God, I laugh whan that I thinke,
How pitously on night I made hem swynke,
But, by my fay! I told of it no stoor;
Thay had me give her lond and her tresor,
Me nedith not no lenger doon diligence
To wynne her love or doon hem reverence.
Thay loved me so wel, by God above!
That I tolde no deynte of her love.
A wys womman wol bysi hir ever in oon
To gete hir love, there sche hath noon.
But synnes I had hem holly in myn hond,
And synnes thay had me geven al her lond,
What schuld I take keep hem for to please,
But it were for my profyt, or myn ease?
I sette hem so on werke, by my fay!
That many a night thay songen weylaway.
The bacoun was nought fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men fecche in Essex at Donmowe.[1]

[1] Lord Fitzwalter, in the reign of Henry III., ordered that whatever married couple did not quarrel or repent of their marriage within

I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
To bringe me gaye thinges fro the faire.
Thay were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire;
For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.
Now herkeneth how I bar me proprely.
Ye wise wyves, that can understonde,
Thus scholde ye speke, and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely can ther no man
Swere and lye as a womman can.[1]
(I say not by wyves that ben wise,
But if it be whan thay ben mysavise.)
Iwis a wif, if that sche can hir good,
Schal beren him on hond the cow is wood,[2]
And take witnes on hir oughne mayde
Of hire assent; but herkenith how I sayde.
See, olde caynard, is this thin array?[3]
Why is my neghebores wif so gay?

---

a year and a day, should go to his priory of Dunmow, in Essex, and receive a flitch of bacon, on swearing to the truth, kneeling on two stones in the churchyard. The flitch has accordingly been claimed from time to time, the last occasion being at a meeting of the Dunmow Agricultural Society in January, 1838, as recorded in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* of that date. See also BLOUNT'S *Jocular Tenures*, edit. 1784, p. 296. A similar custom prevailed at Whichenover.—PLOTT'S *Hist. of Staffordshire*. Tyrwhitt says it also existed in Bretagne, and quotes the following:—'A l'abbaie Sainct Melaine, pres Rennes, y a plus de six cens ans sont, un costé de lard encore tout frais et non corrompu, et neantmoins voué et ordonné aux premiers qui par an et jour ensemble mariez ont vescu sans debat, grondement, et sans s'en repentir.'—*Contes d'Eutrap*, tom. ii. p. 161.

[1] This is taken from the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'Car plus hardiment que nulz homme,
Certainement jurent et mentent.'

[2] Shall make them believe falsely that the cow is wood, which may signify either that the cow is *mad* or *made of wood*; which of the two is the preferable interpretation it will be safest not to determine till we can discover the old story to which this phrase seems to be a proverbial allusion.—T.

[3] Tyrwhitt says, 'In the following speech, it would be endless to point out all Chaucer's imitations. The beginning is from the fragment of Theophrastus, quoted by St. Jerome, c. *Jovin*, and by John of Salisbury, *Polycrat.*, lib. viii. c. xi.—See also *Roman de la Rose*.

Sche is honoured over al ther sche goth;
I sitte at hom, I have no thrifty cloth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is sche so fair? what, artow amorous?
What roune ye with hir maydenes? *benedicite*,
Sir olde lecchour, let thi japes be.
And if I have a gossib, or a frend
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a fend,
If that I walk or play unto his hous.
Thou comest hom as dronken as a mous,[1]
And prechist on thy bench, with evel preef,
Thou saist to me, it is a gret meschief
To wedde a pover womman, for costage;
And if that sche be riche and of parage,
Thanne saist thou, that it is a tormentrie
To suffre hir pride and hir malencolie.
And if that sche be fair, thou verray knave,
Thou saist that every holour wol hir have;
Sche may no while in chastite abyde,
That is assayled thus on eche syde.
Thou saist that som folk desire us for riches,
Som for our schap, and som for our fairnes,
And some, for that sche can synge and daunce,
And some for gentilesse or daliaunce,
Som for hir handes and hir armes smale:
Thus goth al to the devel by thi tale.
Thou saist, men may nought kepe a castel wal,
It may so be biseged over al.
And if sche be foul, thanne thou saist, that sche
Coveitith every man that sche may se;
For, as a spaynel, sche wol on him lepe,
Til that sche fynde som man hire to chepe.

---

[1] In a note on this expression, Mr. Wright quotes a letter from a monk of Preston, in which the writer says that his brother monks of that house 'drynk an bowll after collacyon tell ten or xii. of the clock, and come to mattens as *dronck as mys*.'—'Letters relating to the suppression of the monasteries;' Camd. Society's publications.

Ne noon so gray a goos goth in the lake,
As sayest thou, wol be withouten make.[1]
And saist, it is an hard thing for to wolde
Thing, that no man wol, his willes, holde.[2]
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou gost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedith for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendith unto hevene.
With wilde thunder dynt and fuyry levene
Mote thi wicked necke be to-broke!
Thou saist, that droppyng hous, and eek smoke,
And chydyng wyves maken men to fle
Out of here oughne hous; a, *benedicite*,
What eylith such an old man for to chyde?
Thou seist, we wyves woln oure vices hide,
Til we ben weddid, and than we wil hem schewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a schrewe.
Thou saist, that assen, oxen, and houndes,
Thay ben assayed at divers stoundes,
Basyns, lavours eek, er men hem bye,
Spones, stooles, and al such housbondrie,
Also pottes, clothes, and array;
But folk of wyves maken non assay,
Til thay ben weddid, olde dotard schrewe!
And thanne, saistow, we woln oure vices schewe.
Thou saist also, that it displesith me
But if that thou wilt praysen my beaute,
And but thou pore alway in my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a fest on thilke day
That I was born, and make me freisch and gay;

[1] There is a common proverb in French of the same import:—'Chaque pot a son couvercle.'

[2] Tyrwhitt reads—

'And sayst it is an hard thing to welde
A thing that no man will, his thankes, holde.'

In the glossary he interprets *welde, govern*. The meaning, not at first obvious, is, It is hard to be obliged to wield, or govern, a thing (meaning his wife) which no one would willingly continue to hold or possess. The expression, *his thanks*, like *his willes*, has been already explained, vol. i., p. 140, note 1.

And but thou do my norice honoure,
And to my chamberer withinne my boure,
And to my fadres folk, and myn allies:
Thus saistow, olde barel ful of lies!
And yit of oure apprentys Jankyn,
For his crisp her, schynyng as gold so fyn,
And for he squiereth me up and doun,
Yet hastow caught a fals suspeccioun;
I nyl him nought, though thou were deed to morwe.
But tel me wherfor hydestow with sorwe
The keyes of thy chist away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thin, parde.[1] [dame?
'What! wenest thou make an ydiot of oure
Now by that lord that cleped is seint Jame,
Thow schalt not bothe, though thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good;
That oon thou schalt forgo maugre thin yen!
What helpeth it on me tenqueren or espien?
I trowe thou woldest lokke me in thy chest.
Thou scholdist say, 'wif, go wher the lest;
Take youre disport; I nyl lieve no talis;
I know yow for a trewe wif, dame Alis.'
We loveth no man, that takith keep or charge
Wher that we goon; we love to be at large.
'Of alle men i-blessed most he be
The wise astrologe daun Ptholome,[2]
That saith this proverbe in his Almagest:
Of alle men his wisedom is highest,
That rekkith not who hath the world in honde.
By this proverbe thou schalt understonde,
Have thou ynough, what thar the recch or care
How merily that other folkes fare?
For certes, olde dotard, with your leve,
Ye schul have queynte right ynough at eve.

---

[1] *Scil., of me.* So Numb. xvi. 14, Korah and Dathan exclaim, 'Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?'

[2] The Μεγαλη Συνταξις of Ptolemy, called by the Arabs *Almegisthi.*

He is to gret a nygard that wol werne
A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
He schal have never the lasse light, parde.
Have thou ynough, the thar not pleyne the.
'Thou saist also, that if we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastite.
And yit, with sorwe, thou most enforce the,
And say these wordes in thapostles name:[1]
In abyt maad with chastite and schame
Ye wommen schuld apparayl yow, quod he,
And nought with tressed her, and gay perré.
As perles, ne with golden clothis riche.
After thy text, ne after thin rubriche,
I wol nought wirche as moche as a gnat.
Thow saist thus that I was lik a cat;
For who so wolde senge the cattes skyn,
Than wold the catte duellen in his in;
And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,
Sche wol not duelle in house half a day,
But forth sche wil, er eny day be dawet,
To schewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwrawet.
This is to say, if I be gay, sir schrewe,
I wol renne aboute, my borel for to schewe.
Sir olde fool, what helpith the to aspien?
Though thou praydest Argus with his hundrid yen[2]
To be my wardecorps, as he can best,
In faith he schuld not kepe me but if me[3] lest;
Yit couthe I make his berd, though queynte he be.
Thou saydest eek, that ther ben thinges thre,
The whiche thinges troublen al this erthe,
And that no wight may endure the ferthe.
O leve sire schrewe, Jhesu schorte thy lif!
Yit prechestow, and saist, an hateful wif
I-rekened is for oon of these meschaunces.
Ben ther noon other of thy resemblaunces

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 9. [2] Ovid's *Metamorph.*
[3] The Harl. MS., followed by Mr. Wright, reads *he*, which makes no sense. *Me* is from Tyrwhitt.

That ye may liken youre parables unto,
But if a cely wyf be oon of tho?
Thow likenest wommannes love to helle,
To bareyn lond, ther water may not duelle.
Thou likenest it also to wilde fuyr;
The more it brenneth, the more it hath desir
To consume every thing, that brent wol be.
Thou saist, right as wormes schenden a tre,
Right so a wif schendith hir housebonde;
This knowen tho that ben to wyves bonde.
Lordynges, right thus, as ye han understonde,
Bar I styf myn housebondes on honde,
That thus thay sayde in her dronkenesse;
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
On Jankyn, and upon my nece also.
O Lord, the peyne I dede hem, and the wo,
Ful gulteles, by Goddes swete pyne;
For as an hors, I couthe bothe bite and whyne;
I couthe pleyne, and yet I was in the gilt,
Or elles I hadde often tyme be spilt.
Who so first cometh to the mylle, first grynt;[1]
I pleyned first, so was oure werre stynt.
Thay were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve
Of thing, that thay never agilt in her lyve.
And wenches wold I beren hem on honde,
Whan that for seek thay miglit unnethes stonde,
Yit tykeled his herte for that he
Wende I had of him so gret chierete.
I swor that al my walkyng out a nyght
Was for to aspie wenches that he dight.
Under that colour had I many a mirthe.
For al such witte is geven us of birthe;
Deceipt wepyng, spynnyng, God hath give
To wymmen kyndely[1] whil thay may lyve.[2]

[1] This proverb is found also in French, in the fifteenth century:—'Qui premier vient au moulin premier doit mouldre.'—W.

[2] This appears to have been a popular saying. In the margin of the Lansdowne MS. it is given in a Latin leonine, thus:—

'Fallere, flere, nere, dedit Deus in muliere.'—W.

And thus of o thing I avaunte me,
At thende I had the bet in ech degré,
By sleight or fors, or of som maner thing,
As by continuel murmur or chidyng,[1]
Namly on bedde, hadden thay meschaunce,
Ther wold I chide, and do hem no plesaunce;
I wold no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felt his arm over my syde,
Til he had maad his raunsoun unto me,
Than wold I suffre him doon his nycete.
And therfor every man this tale telle,
Wynne who so may, for al is for to selle;
With empty hond men may noon haukes lure,
For wynnyng wold I al his lust endure,
And make me a feyned appetyt,
And yit in bacoun[2] had I never delyt;
That made me that ever I wold hem chyde.
For though the pope had seten hem bisyde,
I nold not spare hem at her oughne bord,
For, by my trouthe, I quyt hem word for word.
Als help me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now schuld make my testament,
I owe hem nought a word, that it nys quitte,
I brought it so aboute by my witte,
That they most geve it up, as for the best,
Or ellis had we never ben in rest.
For though he loked as a gryin lyoun,
Yit schuld he fayle of his conclusioun.
Than wold I say, 'now, goode leef, tak keep,
How mekly lokith Wilkyn our scheep!
Com ner, my spouse, let me ba thy cheke.
Ye schulde be al pacient and meke,
And have a swete spiced consciens,[3]
Siththen ye preche so of Jobes paciens.

---

[1] Most of the MSS. have, with Tyrwhitt, *grucchyng*.—W.

[2] Bacon is smoke-dried for keeping: the allusion would seem to be, therefore, to her husband's old age.

[3] See vol. i., p. 99, note 2. It here appears to mean scrupulous.

Suffreth alway, syns ye so wel can preche,
And but ye do, certeyn we schul yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
On of us tuo mot bowe douteles;
And, siththen man is more resonable,
Than womman is, ye moste be suffrable.
What aylith yow thus for to grucche and grone?
Is it for ye wold have my queynt allone?
Why, tak it al; lo, have it every del.
Peter![1] I schrewe yow but ye love it wel.
For if I wolde selle my *bele chose*,
I couthe walk as freisch as eny rose,
But I wol kepe it for youre owne toth.
Ye ben to blame, by God, I say yow soth!'
Such maner wordes hadde we on honde.
Now wol I speke of my fourth housbonde.
My fourthe housbond was a revelour,
This is to say, he had a paramour,
And I was yong, and ful of ragerie,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.
How couthe I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge ywys as eny nightyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draught of swete wyn.
Metillius,[2] the foule cherl, the swyn,
That with a staf byraft his wyf hir lyf
For sche drank wyn, though I had ben his wif,
Ne schuld he[3] nought have daunted me fro drink;
And after wyn on Venus most I think.
For al so siker as cold engendrith hayl,
A likorous mouth most have a licorous tail.

---

[1] By St. Peter! a common oath, like 'Marry!' for St. Mary.

[2] The story is told by Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xiv. c. 13, of one Mecenius; but Chaucer probably quoted from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. 3.

[3] *He*, which is necessary both for the sense and metre, being omitted in the Harl. MS., is supplied from Tyrwhitt.

In wymmen vinolent is no defens,[1]
This knowen lecchours by experiens.
But, lord Crist, whan that it remembrith me
Upon my youthe, and on my jolite,
It tikelith me aboute myn herte-roote!
Unto this day it doth myn herte boote,
That I have had my world as in my tyme.
But age, allas! that al wol envenyme,
Hath me bireft my beauté and my pith;
Let go, farwel, the devyl go therwith.
The flour is goon, ther nis no more to telle,
The bran, as I best can, now mot I selle.
But yit to be mery wol I fonde.
Now wol I telle of my fourt housbonde.
I say, I had in herte gret despyt,
That he of eny other had delit;
But he was quit, by God, and by seint Joce;[2]
I made him of the same woode a croce,[3]
Nought of my body in no foul manere,
But certeynly I made folk such chere,
That in his owne grees I made him frie
For anger, and for verray jalousie.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatory,
For which I hope his soule be in glory.
For, God it wot, he sat ful stille and song,
Whan that his scho ful bitterly him wrong.[4]
Ther was no wight, sauf God and he, that wist
In many wyse how sore I him twist.
He dyed whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
And lith i-grave under the roode-bem;[5]

---

[1] From the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'Car puisque femme est enyvrée,
El n'a point en soy de defense.'

[2] Saint Judocus, or Joce, was a saint of Ponthieu.—*Vocab. Hagiol.* prefixed to *Menage, Etym. Franc.*—T.

[3] I made him a cross, an instrument of torture, out of the same material that he tortured me with, *scil.*, jealousy.

[4] An allusion to the story of the Roman sage, who, when blamed for divorcing his wife, said that a shoe might appear outwardly to fit well, but no one but the wearer knew where it pinched.—W.

[5] Across the arch which usually divides the chancel from the nave

Al is his tombe nought so curious
As was the sepulcre of him Darius,
Which that Appellus wrought so subtily.
It nys but wast to burie him preciously.
Let him farwel, God give his soule rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.
'Now of my fifte housbond wol I telle;
God let his soule never come in helle!
And yet was he to me the moste schrewe,
That fele I on my ribbes alle on rewe,
And ever schal, unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was so freisch and gay,
And therwithal so wel he couthe me glose,
Whan that he wold have my *bele chose*,
That, though he had me bete on every boon,
He couthe wynne my love right anoon.
I trowe, I loved him beste, for that he
Was of his love daungerous to me.
We wymmen han, if that I schal nought lye,
In this matier a queynte fantasie.
Wayte,[1] what thyng we may not lightly have,
Therafter wol we sonnest crie and crave.
Forbeed us thing, and that desire we;
Pres on us fast, and thanne wol we fle.
With daunger outen alle we oure ware;[2]
Greet pres at market makith deer chaffare,
And to greet chep is holden at litel pris;
This knowith every womman that is wys.
My fyfth housbond, God his soule blesse,
Which that I took for love and no richesse,
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
And had left scole, and went at hoom to borde

---

in English churches was stretched *a beam*, on which was placed *a rood*, that is, a figure of our Lord on the Cross, with the blessed Virgin and St. John standing on each side, as described in the Gospel of St. John. Under this her husband was buried.

[1] *Wayte* has here the force of the French *Tenez!* Hold! look ye!

[2] Difficulty in making our bargain makes us bring out all our ware for sale. For *outen* Tyrwhitt reads *uttren*; both mean the same.

With my gossib, duellyng in our toun:
God have hir soule, hir name was Alisoun.
Sche knew myn herte and my privite
Bet than oure parisch prest, so mot I the.
To hir bywreyed I my counseil al;
For had myn housbond pissed on a wal,
Or don a thing that schuld have cost his lif,
To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my neece, which I loved wel,
I wold have told his counseil every del.
And so I did ful ofte, God is woot,
That made his face ofte reed and hoot
For verry schame, and blamyd himself, that he
Had told to me so gret a privete.
And so byfel that oones in a Lent,
(So ofte tyme to my gossib I went,
For ever yit I loved to be gay,
And for to walk in March, Averil, and May[1]
From hous to hous, to here sondry talis)
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossib dame Alis,
And I myself, into the feldes went.
Myn housbond was at Londone al that Lent;
I had the bettir leysir for to pleye,
And for to see, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk; what wist I wher my grace
Was schapen for to be, or in what place?[2]
Therfore I made my visitaciouns[3]
To vigiles, and to processiouns,
To prechings eek, and to this pilgrimages,[4]
To pleyes of miracles, and mariages,

[1] The Spring months, which were the season of the great festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide, invited to walk abroad.

[2] How did I know where it was destined that my favour was to be bestowed?

[3] From the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'Souvent voise à la mere eglise (the cathedral),
Et face visitations
Aux nopces, aux processions,
Aux jeux, aux fêtes, aux caroles.'

[4] Pilgrimages were often, as Percy well observes, made the pretexts

And wered upon my gay scarlet gytes.
These wormes, these moughtes, ne these mytes,
Upon my perel fretith hem never a deel,
And wostow why? for thay were used wel.
Now wol I telle forth what happid me:—
I say, that in the feldes walkid we,
Til trewely we had such daliaunce
This clerk and I, that of my purvyaunce
I spak to him, and sayde how that he,
If I were wydow, schulde wedde me.
For certeynly, I say for no bobaunce,
Yit was I never withouten purveyaunce
Of mariage, ne of no thinges eeke;
I hold a mouses hert not worth a leek,
That hath but oon hole to sterte to,
And if that faile, than is al i-do.
[1]I bare him on hond he had enchanted[2] me;
(My dame taughte me that subtiltee)

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for assignations. Thus, in *Pepys' Collection*, vol. 1., p. 226, is a kind of Interlude, beginning:—

'As I went to Walsingham,
To the shrine with speede,
Met I with a jolly palmer,
In a pilgrimes weede.
'Now God you save, you jolly palmer!'
'Welcome lady gay,
Oft have I sued to thee for love,'
'Oft have I said you nay.''

In the *Vision of Pierce Plowman* also:—

'Hermets on an heape,
With hoked staves,
Wenten to Walsingham,
With her wenches after.'

[1] This and the nine following lines are omitted in the Harl. MS. and others. The second Cambridge MS. has them. They are here printed from Tyrwhitt.—W.

[2] The practice of endeavouring to obtain a reciprocation of love by means of philters and charms was common in the middle ages. It was derived from the classics (see Theocritus, Φαρμακευτριαι), and was a part of that lingering belief in the heathen mythology, as a system of dæmonology and witchcraft, which, though professing to ac-

And eke I sayd, I met of him all night,
He wold han slain me, as I lay upright,
And all my bed was ful of veray blood;
But yet I hope that ye shuln do me good;
For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught;
And al was false, I dremed of him right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames lore,
As wel of that as of other thinges more.
But now, sir, let me se, what I schal sayn;
A ha! by God, I have my tale agayn.[1]
'Whan that my fourthe housbond was on bere,
I wept algate and made a sory cheere,
As wyves mooten, for it is usage;
And with my kerchief covered my visage;
But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wept but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn housbond brought on morwe
With neighebors that for him made sorwe,

---

knowledge the true God, sought to obtain benefits from the assistance of the Devil, and which is the key, not only to many superstitions of the time, but even to the (otherwise unaccountable) proneness of the Jewish people to fall into idolatry. Froissart relates, that Gaston de Foix, son of the celebrated Gaston, received a bag of powder from his uncle, Charles the Bad, with directions to sprinkle a small quantity over anything his father eat, the effect of which would be to restore his father's affection for Gaston's mother, who was at that time separated from her husband, and resident at Charles the Bad's Court. There is also an example in *Othello*, Act i. sc. 2 :—

> 'Thou hast practised on her with foul charms,
> Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
> That waken motion.'

Newton, in a book intended to assist in self-examination, called, *Tryall of a Man's owne self*, (1602, p. 116,) directs the penitent to inquire of his conscience under breaches of the seventh commandment, 'Whether by any secret sleight or cunning, as drinkes, drugges, medicines, *charmed potions, amatorious philters, figures, characters*, or any such like paltering instruments, devices, or practices, thou hast gone about to *procure others to doate for love of thee*.'

[1] This way of taking up the thread of the story is very dramatic and spirited, as well as characteristic of the Wyf of Bathes coolness and self-possession.

And Jankyn oure clerk was oon of tho.
As help me God, whan that I saugh him go
After the beere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene[1] and faire,
That al myn hert I gaf unto his hold.
He was, I trowe, twenty wynter old,
And I was fourty, if I schal say the sothe,
But yit I had alway a coltis tothe.
Gattothid[2] I was, and that bycom me wel,
I had the prynte of seynt Venus sel.
As helpe me God, I was a lusty oon,
And faire, and riche, and yonge, and wel begon;[3]
And trewely, as myn housbonds tolde me,
I had the best queynt that might be.
For certes I am all venerian
In felyng, and my herte is marcian:
Venus me gave my lust and likerousnesse.
And Mars gave me my sturdy hardinesse.
Myn ascent was Taur, and Mars therinne;
Allas, alas, that ever love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun:
By vertu of my constillacioun:
That made me that I couthe nought withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes marke uppon my face,
And also in another privé place.
For God so wisly be my salvacioun,
I loved never by no discretioun,
But ever folwed myn owne appetit,
All were he shorte, longe, blake, or whit;
I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
How povre he was, ne eek of what degre.

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[1] *Clene* means, of course, *cleanly made*; without clumsiness or superfluous flesh.

[2] See vol. i., p. 97, note 3.

[3] The Harl. MS. omits this and the seven following lines; also the eight lines beginning 'Yet have I,' &c. The second Cambridge MS. is the only one I have collated which contains them all. The Lansd. and first Cambridge MSS. omit the last eight. I have taken them from Tyrwhitt, collated with the MSS.—W.

What schuld I say? but at the monthis ende
This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so heende,
Hath weddid me with gret solempnitee,
And to him gaf I al the lond and fee
That ever was me give therbifore.
But aftir-ward repented me ful sore.
He noldre suffre nothing of my list.
By God, he smot me oones with his fist,
For I rent oones out of his book a lef,
That of that strok myn eere wax al deef.
Styborn I was, as is a leones,
And of my tonge a verray jangleres,
And walk I wold, as I had don' bifore,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn;
For which he ofte tymes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romayn gestes teche.
How he Simplicius Gallus left his wyf,
And hir forsok for terme of al his lyf,
Nought but for open heedid[1] he hir say
Lokying out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romayn told he me by name,
That, for his wyf was at a somer[2] game
Without his wityng he forsok hir eeke.
And thanne wold he upon his book seeke
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Wher he comaundeth, and forbedith faste,
Man schal not suffre his wyf go roule aboute.[3]
Than wold he say right thus withouten doute:

> Who that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,
> And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
> And suffrith his wyf to go seken halwes,[4]
> Is worthy to be honged on the galwes.

But al for nought; I sette nought an hawe
Of his proverbe, ne of his olde sawe;

---

[1] Literally translated from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. c. 3, 'Uxorem dimisit, quod eam *capite aperto* versatam cognoverat.'—T.

[2] This expression arose from summer being the usual season for games. This story is also from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. c. 3.

[3] Ecclus. xxv. 34. [4] To go on pilgrimages. See *ante*, p. 62, note 1.

Ne I wolde not of him corretted be.
I hate him that my vices tellith me,
And so doon mo, God it wot, than I.
This made him with me wood al outerly;
I nolde not forbere him in no cas.
Now wol I say yow soth, by seint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of the book a leef,
For which he smot me, that I was al deef.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his desport he wolde rede alway;
He clepyd it Valerye and Theofrast,[1]
At which book he lough alway ful fast.
And eek ther was som tyme a clerk at Rome,
A cardynal, that heet seint Jerome,
That made a book agens Jovynyan.
In which book eek ther was Tertulyan,
Crisippus, Tortula, and eek Helewys,
That was abbas not fer fro Paris;
And eek the parablis of Salamon,
Ovydes Art, and bourdes many oon;
And alle these were bound in oo volume.
And every night and day was his custume,
Whan he had leysir and vacacioun
From other worldes occupacioun,
To reden in this book of wikked wyves.
He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves,
Than ben of goode wyves in the Bible.
For trustith wel, it is an inpossible,

[1] *Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum, de non Ducenda Uxore* was written by the celebrated Walter Mapes, and will be found as a chapter in his work *De Nugis Curialium*, edited by Mr. Wright. It frequently occurs in MSS. by itself, and is often quoted as a separate book. *Liber Aureolus Theophrasti, de Nuptiis*, is quoted by St. Jerome, *Contra Jovinianum*. To these two books Jean de Meun has been obliged for some of the severest strokes in his *Roman de la Rose;* and Chaucer has transferred the quintessence of all the three works (upon the subject of matrimony) into his *Wyf of Bathes Prologe* and *Marchaundes Tale*. The other works here mentioned, *Tertullian de Pallio*, the *Letters of Eloisa to Abelard*, and Ovid's *Art of Love*, are well known. Tyrwhitt says, 'I know of no *Trotula* but one, whose book, *Curandarum Ægritudinum Muliebrium ante, in, et post partus*, is printed *inter Medicos Antiquos*, Ven. 1547. What is meant by *Crisippus* I cannot guess.'

That any clerk schal spoke good of wyves,
But if it be of holy seintes lyves,
Ne of noon other wyfes never the mo.
Who peyntid the leoun, tel me, who?
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes have withinne her oratories,
Thay wold have write of men more wickidnes,
Than al the mark of Adam may redres.
These children of Mercury and of Venus[1]
Ben in her werkyng ful contrarious.
Mercury lovith wisdom and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispense.
And for her divers disposicioun, . .
Ech fallith in otheres exaltacioun.[2]
And thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltate,
And Venus faylith wher Mercury is reysed.
Therfor no womman of clerkes is preised.
The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkis, is not worth a scho;
Than sit he doun, and writ in his dotage,
That wommen can nought kepe here mariage.
But now to purpos, why I tolde the,
That I was beten for a leef, parde.
Upon a night Jankyn, that was oure sire,
Rad on his book, as he sat by the fyre,
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkidnes
Was al mankynde brought to wrecchednes,
For which that Jhesu Crist himself was slayn,
That bought us with his herte-blood agayn.
Lo here expresse of wommen may ye fynde,
That woman was the lose of al mankynde.

[1] The pursuit of love, which is inspired by Venus, is incompatible with study, over which, and all its concomitants, presides Mercury.

[2] In the old Astrology, a planet was said to be in its *exaltation* when it was in that sign of the Zodiac in which it was supposed to exert its strongest influence. The opposite sign was called its *dejection*, as in that it was supposed to be the weakest. To take the instance in the text, the exaltation of Venus was in *Pisces*, and her *dejection*, of course, in *Virgo*. But in *Virgo* was the *exaltation* of Mercury.—T.

Tho rad he me how Sampson left his heris
Slepyng, his lemman kut hem with hir scheris,
Thurgh which tresoun lost he bothe his yen.
Tho rad[1] he me, if that I schal not lyen,
Of Ercules, and of his Dejanyre,
That caused him to sette himself on fuyre.
No thing forgat he the care and wo
That Socrates had with his wyves tuo;
How Exantipa[2] cast pisse upon his heed.
This seely man sat stille, as he were deed,
He wyped his heed, no more durst he sayn,
But 'Er thunder stynte ther cometh rayn.'
Of Phasipha, that was the queen of Creete,
For schrewednes him thought the tale sweete.
Fy! spek no more, it is a grisly thing,
Of her horribil lust and her likyng.
Of Clydemystra for hir leccherie
That falsly made hir housbond for to dye,
He rad it with ful good devocioun.
He told me eek, for what occasioun
Amphiores at Thebes left his lif;
Myn housbond had a legend of his wyf
Exiphilem, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told
Wher that her housbond hyd him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lyma told he me, and of Lucye;
Thay bothe made her housbondes for to dye,
That oon for love, that other was for hate.
Lyma[3] hir housbond on an even late
Empoysond hath, for that sche was his fo;
Lucia licorous loved hir housbond so,

---

[1] Most of the following instances are mentioned in the *Epist. Valerii ad Rufinum*. See also *Roman de la Rose*, 9615.

[2] Xantippe. In the other proper names in the following lines I have retained the corrupt orthography of the age, as given in the MS. *Phasipha* is, of course, Pasiphae; *Clydemystra*, Clytemnestra; *Amphiores*, Amphiaraus; *Exiphilem*, Eriphyle, &c.—W.

[3] The story is told in the *Epist. Valerii*. 'Luna [here called Lyma] virum suum interfecit quem nimis odivit; Lucelia suum, quem nimis

For that he schuld alway upon hir think,
Sche gaf him such a maner love-drink,
That he was deed er it was by the morwe;
And thus algates housbondes had sorwe.
Than told he me, how oon Latumyus
Compleigned unto his felaw Arrius,
That in his gardyn growed such a tre,
On which he sayde how that his wyves thre
Honged hemselfe for herte despitous.
'O leve brother,' quod this Arrious,
'Gif me a plont of thilke blessid tre,
And in my gardyn schal it plantid be.'
Of latter date of wyves hath he red
That some han slayn her housbondes in her bed,
And let her lecchour dighten al the night,
Whil that the corps lay in the flor upright;
And som han dryven nayles in her brayn,
Whiles thay sleepe, and thus they han hem slayn;
Som have hem give poysoun in her drink;
He spak more harm than herte may bythynk.
And therwithal he knew mo proverbes
Than in this world ther growen gres or herbes.
[1] Better is, quod he, thyn habitacioun
Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,
Than with a womman using for to chyde.
Better is, quod he, hihe in the roof abyde,
Than with an angry womman doun in a hous;
They ben so wicked and so contrarious,
Thay haten that her housbondes loven ay.
He sayd, a womman cast hir schame away,
Whan sche cast of hir smok; and fothermo,
A fair womman, but sche be chast also,
Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.
Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose

---

amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconita; hæc decepta furorem propinavit pro amoris proculo.'—See TYRWHITT. This is a humorous way of proving that a wife is a man's destruction, whether she love or hate.

[1] PROV. xxi. 9, 19, xi. 22.

The wo that in myn herte was and pyne?
And whan I saugh he nolde never fyne
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly thre leves have I plight
Out of this booke that he had, and eeke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke,
That in oure fuyr he fel bak-ward adoun.
And he upstert, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fist he smot me on the hed,
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he saugh so stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wold have fled away.
Til atte last out of my swown I brayde.
'O, hastow slayn me, false thef? ' I sayde,
'And for my lond thus hastow mourdrid me?
Er I be deed, yit wol I kisse the.'
And ner he cam, and knelith faire adoun,
And sayde, 'Deere suster Alisoun,
As help me God, I schal the never smyte;
That I have doon it is thiself to wite;
Forgive it me, and that I the biseke.'
And yet eftsones I hyt him on the cheke,
And sayde, 'Thef, thus mekil I me wreke.
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'
But atte last, with mochil care and wo,
We fyl accordid by ourselven tuo;
He gaf me al the bridil in myn hand
To have the governaunce of hous and land,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
And made him brenne his book anoon right tho.
And whan I hadde geten unto me
By maistry all the sovereynete,
And that he seyde, 'Myn owne trewe wyf,
Do as the list the term of al thy lyf,
Kepe thyn honour, and kep eek myn estat;'
And after that day we never had debat.
God help me so, I was to him as kynde
As eny wyf fro Denmark unto Inde,

And al so trewe was he unto me.
I pray to God that sitte in mageste
So blesse his soule, for his mercy deere.
Now wol I say my tale, if ye wol heere.'
The Frere lough when he had herd al this:
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'so have I joye and blis,
This a long preambel of a tale.'
And whan the Sompnour herd the Frere gale,
'Lo!' quod this Sompnour, 'for Goddes armes tuo,
A frer wol entremet him evermo.
Lo, goode men, a flie and eek a frere
Woln falle in every dissche and matiere.
What spekst thou of perambulacioun?[1]
What? ambil, or trot; or pees, or go sit doun;
Thou lettest oure disport in this matere.'
'Ye, woltow so, sir sompnour!' quod the Frere:
'Now, by my fay, I schal, er that I go,
Telle of a sompnour such a tale or tuo,
That alle the folke schuln laughen in this place.'
'Now, ellis, frere, I byschrew thy face,'[2]
Quod this Sompnour, 'and I byschrewe me,
But if I telle tales tuo or thre
Of freres, er I come to Sydingborne,[3]
That I schall make thin herte for to morne;
For wel I wot thy paciens is goon.'
Oure Hoste cride, 'Pees, and that anoon;'
And sayde, 'Let the womman telle hir tale.
Ye fare as folkes that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, tel forth your tale, and that is best.'
'Al redy, sir,' quod sche, 'right as you lest,
If I have licence of this worthy frere.'
'Yis, dame,' quod he, 'tel forth, and I schal heere.'

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[1] The Sompnour's ear is caught by the word *preamble*, which he supposes to allude to his professional *perambulations*.

[2] The meaning is, I accept your challenge. Do your worst, and if you do not, I beshrew or invoke a curse on your face.

[3] Sittingbourne, about half way between Rochester and Canterbury. —W.

THE WYF OF BATHES TALE.

[THE story told by this celebrated personage may be considered as an illustration of her prologue, her object in both being to show that what women most desire, and what they moreover ought to have, is their will. The story of *Florent*, in Gower, and *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, in *Percy's Reliques*, are both founded upon this theme. Percy says that the latter 'is chiefly taken from the fragment of an old ballad in the Editor's MS., which he has reason to believe more ancient than the time of Chaucer, and what furnished that bard with *The Wyf of Bathes Tale*.' Tyrwhitt thinks that both Chaucer's and Gower's versions are taken from an older narrative in the *Gesta Romanorum*, or some such collection; and that *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* was written by some one who had seen both. Percy may, however, be right; for he states that *his* ballad was only *founded on* a mutilated copy, the deficiencies of which he probably supplied from Gower and Chaucer; and this may account for the impression which his ballad conveyed to Tyrwhitt. The characteristic peculiarities of this bold and witty woman of the world are well preserved in her manner of relating the story.]

IN olde dayes of the kyng Arthour,[1]
Of which that Britouns speken gret honour,

[1] All that is now known of this celebrated hero of romance is contained in the *History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, a Welsh Benedictine monk, who about the year 1128 translated into Latin an ancient chronicle in the Welsh or British language, entitled *Brut-y-Brenhied; or, the History of the Kings of Britain*, and discovered about the year 1100 by Walter Archdeacon of Oxford, in Armorica or Bretagne. What became of the British original is not known; and all the numerous romances on the same subject are supposed to be subsequent to, and derived from Geoffrey's Latin translation. Arthur's very existence has been called in question; but this arose probably from the idea prevalent among the antiquaries of the last century, that it was a point of honour to disbelieve anything told by a monk; yet it seems unphilosophical to reject a popular tradition preserved in all the national poetry of the Welsh and Britons of a period not very far removed from the date of their hero's existence, which is assigned to about the year 506. It would be endless to enumerate the romances and ballads founded on

Al was this lond fulfilled of fayrie ;[1]
The elf-queen,[2] with hir joly compaignye,

Arthur's exploits and magnificence, which formed the delight and the model of princes and knights in the days of Chaucer. Walsingham relates that Edward III., after his triumphant return from Scotland, established in the castle of Windsor a fraternity of twenty-four knights, for whom he erected a round table, with a round chamber, which still remains, according to a similar institution of King Arthur.

[1] The ancient Britons of the time of Arthur were a mixed race, composed of the aboriginal inhabitants and the Roman colonists, who brought with them from Italy that beautiful form of pantheism which still lives in the pages of Ovid. But when Christianity emerged from the catacombs, it was not long in reaching the most distant colonies; and its missionaries taught the people to regard their old deities as evil spirits, who had adopted that mode of withdrawing them from the worship of the true God. Thus in Acts xvi. St. Paul is said to have cast out of a young woman an evil spirit of *Python*, or Apollo, which had enabled her to prophesy; and, 1 Cor. x. 20, he says, 'The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to dæmons.' Following Scripture, our great Christian poet, in his enumeration of the fallen spirits who first rose from the burning lake, after mentioning the gods of the Philistines, describes the classic deities—

> 'The rest were long to tell, though far renowned;
> The Ionian gods, of Javan's issue held
> Gods. . . . . .
> These first in Crete
> And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
> Of cold Olympus, ruled the middle air,
> Their highest Heaven; on the Delphian cliff,
> Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
> Of Doric land.'

But though the Church taught that these idols were ministers of the Evil Spirit, whom Christians had renounced, it was difficult to eradicate a form of pantheism so fascinating that even now it captivates many minds; and so the matter was compromised. Like the Israelites, under similar circumstances, the people 'worshipped Jehovah, *and* served Baalim;' and hence was derived the belief in those mysterious beings, who, like the gods of Greece and Rome, personified the powers of nature and the passions of the human heart; who peopled every grove and stream, and rode upon the eddying whirlwind; who were neither absolutely good nor utterly evil, but 'ruled the middle air;' and who were therefore regarded with a mixture of fear and good-will by the ancient Britons at the period when the Roman traditions had not yet had time to die away. Then it was that the land was '*fulfilled* of fayrie,' that is, with the lingering worship of the deities of ancient Rome, which was afterwards mingled with the Gothic mythology.

[2] The Queen of Fairy, who represented Proserpine in the old mythology. See *Marchaundes Tale*.

Daunced ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old oppynyoun, as I rede;
I speke of many hundrid yer ago;
But now can no man see noon elves mo.
For now the grete charite and prayeres
Of lymytours and other holy freres,
That sechen every lond and every streem,
As thik as motis in the sonne-beem,
Blessyng halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
Citees and burghes, castels hihe and toures,
Thropes and bernes, shepnes and dayeries,[1]
That makith that ther ben no fayeries.
For ther as wont was to walken an elf,
Ther walkith noon but the lymytour himself,
In undermeles and in morwenynges,
And saith his matyns and his holy thinges
As he goth in his lymytatioun.[2]
Wommen may now go saufly up and doun;
In every bussch, and under every tre,
Ther is non other incubus[3] but he,

[1] In the old rituals are forms of invoking a blessing upon everything dedicated to the service of man. There is a Benedictio domorum, loci, domus novæ, thalami, novæ navis (a great deal better than our profane form of 'christening' a vessel) novorum fructuum, &c. Of these forms our custom of 'saying grace' or 'blessing the meat,' as the Scots say, is a remnant.

[2] All religious persons were bound, if possible, to recite the divine office, here called 'his matyns and his holy thinges,' at the proper hour, in the choir; but secular priests, not living in common, and friars, being by their rule obliged to walk about within their limitation to beg their maintenance, were allowed to say it privately at 'undermeles,' after dinner, as they walked. Of this there is a vestige in the order prefixed to our *Book of Common Prayer*, which directs that all priests and deacons shall say the matins and evensong, either publicly or privately, not being hindered by sickness. See *Schipmannes Tale*.

[3] This is an example of Chaucer's light and well-bred satire;—he says just enough to raise a smile at the person satirised, and passes on without effort or ill-humour to the main subject. Of the propensities of the incubus, whose place the friar is supposed to have taken, we may judge from the exquisite ballad of *Tamlane*, given in Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. ii.:—

'O, I forbid ye maidens a',
That wear gowd in your hair,
To come or gae by Carterhaugh,
For young Tamlane is there.

And he ne wol doon hem no dishonour.[1]
And so bifel it, that this king Arthour
Had in his hous a lusty bacheler,
That on a day com rydyng fro ryver;[2]
And happed, al alone as sche was born,
He saugh a mayde walkyng him byforn,
Of which mayden anoon, maugre hir heed,
By verray fors byraft hir maydenhed.
For which oppressioun was such clamour,
And such pursuyte unto kyng Arthour,
That dampned was the knight and schuld be ded
By cours of lawe, and schuld have lost his heed,
(Paraventure such was the statut tho,)
But that the queen and other ladys mo
So longe preyeden they the kyng of grace,
Til he his lif hath graunted in the place,

There's nane that gaes by Carterhaugh,
But maun give him a wad,
Either gowd rings or green mantles,
Or else their maidenhead.'

The fair Janet, however, despises the warning, and when questioned by her father, says,—

'If my love were an earthly wight,
As he's an *elfin gray*,' &c.

The incubus, in fact, corresponds with the Jupiters, Apollos, and Plutos of the old mythology, and from them inherited his love for mortal beauties. This proved often a convenient belief; and Scott relates a story of a lady who accounted to her lord on his return from the Crusade for the presence of a boy, whose age could not be made to correspond with the time of his departure, by declaring that the river Tweed had insisted on becoming the father of her son, who was afterwards the ancestor of the well-known family of Tweeddie. Thus, in Dunbar's *Golden Targe*,—

'Thair was Pluto, that elritch *incubus*,
In cloke of greene.'

The allusion appears to be to the *Rape of Proserpine*. See also Mercutio's description of Queen Mab, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act i. sc. 4.

[1] The Harl. MS. reads this line, evidently incorrectly, *And ne wol but doon hem dishonour*. In the previous line the same manuscript reads erroneously *incumbent*, instead of *incubus*.—W.

[2] It means from hawking at water-fowl. Froissart, vol. i. c. l. 140, says:—'Le comte de Flandres estoit toujours *en riviere*—un jour advint qu'il alla voller *en la riviere*—et getta son fauconier un faucon apres *le heron*.' Sire Thopas is described as following this knightly sport.

And gaf him to the queen, al at hir wille
To chese wethir sche wold him save or spille,
The queen thanked the kyng with al hir might;
And after thus sche spak unto the knight,
Whan that sche saugh hir tyme upon a day:
'Thow stondest yet,' quod sche, 'in such array,
That of thy lyf hastow no sewerte;
I graunte thy lif, if thou canst telle me,
What thing is it that wommen most desiren;
Be war, and keep thy nek-bon fro the iren.
And if thou canst not tellen it anoon,
Yet wol I give the leve for to goon
A twelfmonth and a day,[1] it for to lere
An answer suffisant in this matiere.
And seurte wol I have, er that thou pace,
Thy body for to yelden in this place.'
Wo was this knight, and sorwfully he siked;
But what? he may not doon al as him liked,
And atte last he ches him for to wende,
And come agein right at the yeres ende
With swich answer as God him wolde purveye;
And takith his leve, and wendith forth his weye,
He sekith every hous and every place,
Wher so he hopith for to fynde grace,
To lerne what thing wommen loven most;
But he ne couthe arryven in no cost,
Wher as he mighte fynde in this mattiere
Two creatures accordyng in fere.[2]
Some sayden, wommen loven best richesse,
Some sayde honour, and some sayde jolynesse,
Some riche array, some sayden lust on bedde,
And ofte tyme to be wydow and wedde.

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[1] There seems to have been some mysterious importance attached to this particular time of grace: perhaps the day was allowed the criminal over and above the full time of a year, so that he might not suffer from any merely accidental detention, on the same principle that the prisoner is entitled to the benefit of any doubt which may remain in the minds of the jury.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads, *To these thinges accordyng in fere.*—W.

Some sayden owre herte is most i-eased
Whan we ben y-flaterid and y-preised;[1]
He goth ful neigh the soth, I wil not lye;
A man schal wynne us best with flaterye;
And with attendaunce, and with busynesse
Benwe y-limid both more and lesse.
And some sayen, that we loven best
For to be fre, and to doon as us lest,
And that no man repreve us of oure vice,
But say that we ben wys, and no thing nyce.
For trewely ther is noon of us alle,
If eny wight wold claw us on the galle,[2]
That we nyl like, for he saith us soth;
Assay, he and schal fynde it, that so doth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We schuln be holde wys and clene of synne.
And some sayen, that gret delit han we
For to be holden stabil and secre,
And in oon purpos stedfastly to duelle,
And nought bywreye thing that men us telle.
But that tale is not worth a rakes stele.
Pardy, we wymmen can right no thing hele,
Witnes on Mida; wil ye here the tale?
Ovyd,[3] among his other thinges smale,
Sayde Mida had under his lange heris
Growyng upon his heed tuo asses eeris;
The whiche vice he hid, as he best might,
Ful subtilly fro every mannes sight,
That, save his wyf, ther wist of that nomo;
He loved hir most, and trusted hir also;
He prayed hir, that to no creature
Sche schulde tellen of his disfigure.

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *y-pleased;* but the reading I have adopted seems to give the best sense.—W.

[2] This expression means, literally, to rub or stroke on a sore place; metaphorically, to flatter us in that very particular in which we feel ourselves deficient.

[3] Ovid, *Metamorph.*, lib. xi.

Sche swor him, nay, for al this world to wynne,
Sche nolde do that vilonye or synne
To make hir housband have so foul a name;
Sche wold not tel it for hir oughne schame.
But natheles hir thoughte that sche dyde,
That sche so longe a counseil scholde hyde;
Hir thought it swal so sore about hir hert,
That needely som word hir most astert;
And sins sche dorst not tel it unto man,
Doun to a marreys faste by sche ran,
Til sche cam ther, hir herte was on fuyre;
And as a bytoure[1] bumblith in the myre,
Sche layde hir mouth unto the water doun.
'Bywrey me not, thou watir, with thi soun.'
Quod sche, 'to the I telle it, an nomo,
Myn housbond hath long asse eeris tuo.
Now is myn hert al hool, now is it oute,
I might no lenger kepe it out of doute.'
Her may ye se, theigh we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it moot, we can no counseil hyde.
The remenaunt of the tale, if ye wil here,
Redith Ovid, and ther ye mow it leere.
This knight, of which my tale is specially,
Whan that he saugh he might nought come therby,
This is to say, that wommen loven most,
Withinne his brest ful sorwful was the gost.
But hom he goth, he might not lenger sojourne,
The day was come, that hom-ward most he torne.
And in his way, it hapnyd him to ride
In al his care, under a forest side,
Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go
Of ladys four and twenty, and yit mo.
Toward this ilke daunce he drough ful yerne,
In hope that he som wisdom schuld i-lerne;

---

[1] The bittern is said to make its peculiar noise, which is called bumbling, by thrusting its bill into the mud, and blowing.—See BEWICK'S *British Birds*.

But certeynly, er he com fully there,
Vanysshid was this daunce, he nyste where;
No creature saugh he that bar lif,
Sauf on the greene he saugh sittying a wyf,
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
Agens the knight this olde wyf gan ryse,
And sayd, 'Sir knight, heer forth lith no way;
Tel me what ye seekyn, by your fay.
Paradventure it may the better be:
Thise olde folk con mochil thing,' quod sche,
'My lieve modir,' quod this knight, 'certayn
I am but ded but if that I can sayn
What thing is it that wommen most desire;
Couthe ye me wisse, I wold wel quyt your huyre.
'Plight me thy trouth her in myn hond,' quod sche,
'The nexte thing that I require the,
Thou schalt it doo, if it be in thy might,
And I wol telle it the, er it be night.'
'Have her my trouthe,' quod the knight, 'I graunte.'
'Thanne,' quod sche, 'I dar me wel avaunte,
Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stonde therby,
Upon my lif the queen wol say as I;
Let se, which is the proudest of hem alle,
That werith on a coverchief or a calle,
That dar say nay of thing I schal the teche.
Let us go forth withouten more speche.'
Tho rowned sche a pistil in his eere,
And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
Whan thay ben comen to the court, this knight
Sayd, he had holde his day, that he hight,
Al redy was his answer, as he sayde.
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
And many a wydow, for that thay ben wyse,
The queen hirself sittyng as a justise,[1]

[1] Queen Guenever is represented sitting as judge in a 'Court of Love,' similar to those in fashion in Chaucer's time, of the proceedings of which he has left a 'report,' in his poem called *The Court of Love*. Fontenelle (in the third vol. of his works, Paris, 1742) has given a de-

Assemblid ben, his answer for to hiere;
And after-ward this knight was bode appiere,
To every wight comaundid was silence,
And that the knight schuld telle in audience
What thing that worldly wommen loven best.
This knight ne stood not stille, as doth a best,
But to the questioun anoon answerde,
With manly voys, that al the court it herde;
'My liege lady, generally,' quod he,
'Wommen desiren to have soveraynte
As wel over hir housbond as over hir love,
And for to be in maystry him above.
This is your most desir, though ye me kille;
Doth as yow list, I am heer at your wille.'
In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,
Ne wydow, that contraried that he sayde;
But sayden, he was worthy have his lif.
And with that word upstart that olde wif,
Which that the knight saugh sittyng on the grene.
'Mercy,' quod sche, 'my soveraign lady queene,
Er that your court departe, doth me right.
I taughte this answer unto the knight;
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thing that I wold him requere,
He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I the, sir knight,'
Quod sche, 'that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou wost, that I have kept thy lif;
If I say fals, sey nay, upon thy fey.'
This knight answerd, 'Allas and waylawey![1]

---

scription of one of the fantastic suits tried in these courts. About the year 1206, the Queen of France was appealed to from an unjust sentence pronounced in the Court of Love of the Countess of Champagne; but the Queen replied, 'God forbid that I should presume to reverse the sentence of the Countess of Champagne!' The best source of information on these strange follies is a book entitled *Erotica, seu Amatoria, Andreæ Capellarii Regis*, &c., written about A.D. 1170, and published at Dorpmund in 1610.

[1] The knight's unwillingness is more natural, and affords a better contrast to the sequel, than Sir Gawaine's excessive complaisance in Percy's ballad.

I wot right wel that such was my byhest.
For Goddes love, as chese a new request;
Tak al my good, and let my body go.'
'Nay,' quod sche than, 'I schrew us bothe two.
For though that I be foule, old, and pore,
I nolde for al the metal ne for the ore
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But I thy wife were and eek thy love.'
'My love?' quod he, 'nay, nay, my dampnacioun.
Allas! that eny of my nacioun
Schuld ever so foule disparagid be!'
But al for nought; the ende is this, that he
Constreigned was, he needes most hir wedde,
And takith his wyf, and goth with hir to bedde.
Now wolden som men say paradventure,
That for my necgligence I do no cure
To telle yow the joye and tharray
That at that fest was maad that ilke day.
To which thing schortly answeren I schal,
And say ther nas feste ne joy at al,
Ther nas but hevynes and mochil sorwe;
For privcly he weddyd hir in a morwe,
And alday hudde him as doth an oule,
So wo was hiṁ, his wyf loked so foule.
Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wyf on bedde brought,
He walwith, and he torneth to and fro
His olde wyf lay smylyng ever mo,
And sayd, 'O deere housbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knight with his wyf as ye!
Is this the lawe of king Arthures hous?
Is every knight of his thus daungerous?
I am your oughne love, and eek your wyf,
I am sche that hath savyd your lyf,
And certes ne dede I yow never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me the firste night?
Ye fare lik a man that had left his wit.
What is my gult? for Godes love, tel me it,

And it schal be amendid, if that I may.'
'Amendid!' quod this knight, 'allas! nay, nay,
It wol nought ben amendid, never mo;
Thow art so lothly, and so old also,
And therto comen of so lowh a kynde,
That litil wonder is though I walwe and wynde;
So wolde God, myn herte wolde brest!'
'Is this,' quod sche, 'the cause of your unrest?'
'Ye, certeynly,' quod he, 'no wonder is!'
'Now, sire,' quod sche, 'I couthe amende all this,
If that me list, er it were dayes thre,
So wel ye mighte bere yow to me.
But for ye speken of such gentilesse
As is descendit out of old richesse,
Therfor schuld ye ben holden gentil men;
Such arrogaunce is not worth an hen.
Lok who that is most vertuous alway,
Prive and pert,[1] and most entendith ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
Tak him for the grettest gentil man.
Crist wol we clayme of him oure gentilesse,[2]
Nought of oure eldres for her olde richesse.[3]
For though thay give us al her heritage,
For which we clayme to be of high parage,
Yit may thay not biquethe, for no thing,
To noon of us, so vertuous lyvyng,
That made hem gentil men y-callid be,
And bad us folwe hem in such degre.
Wel can the wyse poet of Florence,
That hatte Daunt, speke of this sentence;

---

[1] Most virtuous both privately and before the world. *Pert* is put for *apert*, open.

[2] Christ desires that we should rest our claim to nobility on Him, that is, on our virtue, which is His gift.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads, *for our gret richesse.*

Lo, in such maner of rym is *Dauntes tale;*
Ful seeld uprisith by his braunchis smale[1]
Prowes of man, for God of his prowesse
Wol that we claime of him our *gentilesse;*
For of our auncestres we no thing clayme
But temporal thing, that men may hurt and mayme.
Ek every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentiles were plaunted naturelly
Unto a certayn lignage doun the line,
Prive ne apert, thay wolde never fine
To don of gentilesce the fair office,
Thay might nought doon no vileny or vice.
Tak fuyr and ber it in the derkest hous
Bitwixe this and the mount Caukasous,
And let men shit the dores, and go thenne,
Yit wol the fuyr as fair and lighte brenne
As twenty thousand men might it biholde;
His office naturel ay wol it holde,
Up peril on my lif, til that it dye.
Her may ye se wel, how that genterye
Is nought annexid to possessioun,
Sithins folk ne doon her operacioun
Alway, as doth the fuyr, lo,[2] in his kynde.
For God it wot, men may ful often fynde
A lordes sone do schame and vilonye.
And he that wol have pris of his gentrie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his eldres noble and vertuous,
And nyl himselve doo no gentil dedes,
Ne folw his gentil aunceter, that deed is,

---

[1] Dante, *Purgatorio*, vii. 121:—

'Rade volte risurge per li rami
L' humana probitate; ed questo vuole
Quei che la da, perche da se si chiami.'

[2] Lo! is here very expressive; it means, as you can see.

He is nought gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vileyn synful deedes maketh a cherl,
For gentilnesse nys but renome
Of thin auncestres, for her heigh bounte,
Which is a straunge thing to thy persone;
Thy gentilesce cometh fro God alloone.
Than comth oure verray gentilesse of grace,
It was no thing biquethe us with oure place.
Thinketh how nobil, as saith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
That out of povert ros to high noblesse.
Redith Senek, and redith eek Boece,
Ther schuln ye se expresse, that no dred is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
And therfor, lieve housbond, I conclude,
Al were it that myn auncetres wer rude,
Yit may the highe God, and so hope I,
Graunte me grace to lyve vertuously;
'Than am I gentil, whan that I bygynne
To lyve vertuously, and weyven synne.
And ther as ye of povert me repreve,
The heighe God, on whom that we bilieve,
In wilful povert ches to lede his lif;[1]
And certes, every man, mayden, or wyf.
May understonde that Jhesus, heven king,
Ne wold not chese a vicious lyvyng.
Glad povert is an honest thing certayn;
This wol Senek and other clerkes sayn.
Who that holt him payd of his povert,
I holde him riche, al had he nought a schert.
He that coveitith is a pore wight,
For he wold have that is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, ne coveyteth nought to have,
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave;

---

[1] The Harl. MS. has *lese*, which appears to have been a mere error of the scribe.—W.

Verray povert is synne proprely.
'Juvenal' saith of povert, merily
The pore man whan he goth by the way
Bifore the theves he may synge and play.
Povert is hateful good; and, as I gesse,
A ful gret brynger out of busynesse;
A gret amender eek of sapiens
To him that takith it in paciens.
Povert is this, although it seme elenge,[2]
Possessioun that no wight wil chalenge.
Povert, ful often, whan a man is lowe,
Makith him his God and eek himself to knowe.
Povert a spectacle is, as thinkith me,
Thurgh which he may his verray frendes se;
And therfor, sir, syth that I yow nought greve,
Of my povert no more me repreve.
'Now, sir, of elde ye repreve me;
And certes, sir, though noon auctorite
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
Sayn that men schuld an old wight doon favour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentilesse;
And auctours I schal fynden, as I gesse.
'Now ther that ye sayn I am foul and old,
Than drede you nought to ben a cokewold.
For filthe and elde,[3] al so mot I the,
Ben grete wardeyns upon chastite.
But natheles, sith I knowe your delyt,
I schal fulfille youre worldly appetyt.

---

[1] *Sat.* x. 22.

[2] These sophistical common-places, which never convinced any one, are taken, as Tyrwhitt says, from Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.*, lib. x. c. 71.

[3] This is, perhaps, the reason of the strange predilection for filth, observable in many of the saints and hermits, even of the early church. In Terence's *Heautontimoreumenos*, Syrus, wishing to prove Antiphila's chastity, thus describes her *ménage*:—

'Una ancillula
Erat; ea texebat unà, *pannis obsita*,
Neglecta, *immunda illuvie*.'—Act ii. sc. 2.

Chese, now,' quod sche, 'oon of these thinges tweye,
To have me foul and old til that I deye,
And be to yow a trewe humble wyf,
And never yow displease in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wol have me yong and fair,
And take your aventure of the repair[1]
That schal be to your hous bycause of me,
Or in som other place it may wel be.
Now chese yourselven whethir that yow liketh.'
This knight avysith him, and sore sikith,
But atte last he sayd in this manere:
'My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I putte me in your wyse governaunce,
Chesith yourself which may be most pleasaunce
And most honour to yow and me also,
I do no fors the whether of the tuo;
For as yow likith, it suffisith me.'
'Than have I gete of yow the maystry,' quod sche,
'Sith I may govern and chese as me list?'
'Ye certis, wyf,' quod he, 'I hold it best.'
'Kys me,' quod sche, 'we ben no lenger wrothe,
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe,
This is to say, ye, bothe fair and good.
I pray to God that I mot sterve wood;
But I be to yow al so good and trewe
As ever was wyf, siththen the world was newe;
And but I be to morow as fair to seen
Ay eny lady, emperesse, or queen,
That is bitwixe thest and eek the west,
Doth by my lyf right even as yow lest.[2]
Cast up the cortyns, and look what this is.'
And whan the knyght saugh verrayly al this,

---

[1] That is, Take your chance for the number of men who may resort to your house to pay their addresses to me.

[2] The second Cambridge MS. reads, instead of this line:—

'And so they slept tille the morwe gray;
And than she saide, when it was day,
'Caste up the curteyn, loke howe it is.''

That sche so fair was, and so yong therto,
For joye he hent hir in his armes tuo;
His herte bathid in a bath of blisse,
A thousand tyme on rowe he gan hir kisse.
And sche obeyed him in every thing
That mighte doon him pleisauns or likyng.
And thus thay lyve unto her lyves end
In parfyt joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende
Housbondes meke, yonge, and freissche on bedde,
And grace to overbyde hem that we wedde.
And eek I pray to Jhesus schort her lyves,
That wil nought be governed after her wyves.
And old and angry nygardes of despense,
God send hem sone verray pestilence!

THE PROLOGE OF THE FRERE.

THIS worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,
He made alway a maner lourynge cheere
Upon the Sompnour, but for honeste
No vileyn's worde yit to him spak he.
But atte last he sayd unto the wyf,
'Dame,' quod he, 'God give yow good lyf!
Ye han her touchid, al so mot I the,
In scole matier gret difficulte.
Ye han sayd mochel thing right wel, I say;
But dame, right as we ryden by the way,
Us needeth nought but for to speke of game,
And lete auctorites,[1] in Goddes name,
To preching and to scoles of clergie.
But if it like to this companye,
I wil yow of a sompnour telle a game;
Parde, ye may wel knowe by the name,

[1] *Auctoritas* means the text, and *expositio auctoritatis*, the comment. It is applied not only to Scripture, but to any *authority*, as we still use the word. Thus Jehan de Vignay, in his introduction to the French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, says, Monseigneur Saint Hierosme me dit ceste *auctorite*.

That of a sompnour may no good be sayd;
I pray that noon of yow be evel apayd;
A sompnour is a renner up and doun
With maundementz for fornicacioun,[1]
And is y-bete at every tounes eende.'
Our oste spak, 'A! sir, ye schold been heende,
And curteys, as a man of your estaat,
In company we wol have no debaat;
Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.'
'Nay,' quoth the Sompnour, 'let him say to me
What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,
By God! I schal him quyten every grot.
I schal him telle which a gret honour
Is to ben a fals flateryng lymytour.[2]
And his offis I schal him telle i-wis.'
Oure host answerd, 'Pees, no more of this.'[3]
And after this he sayd unto the Frere,
'Telleth forth your tale, my leve[4] maister deere.'

THE FRERES TALE.

[THIS tale was probably translated, as Mr. Wright conjectures, from some old fabliau, which also furnished the groundwork of the short tale entitled *De Advocato et Diabolo*, published by the Percy Society in a collection of Latin Stories, edited by Mr. Wright. Another version of the story, still closer to Chaucer's tale, has since been discovered in the British Museum (MS.

[1] Citations, or summonses, addressed to those accused of breaches of the canons, to appear and answer in the Archdeacon's court. The officer charged with the duty of serving these was no doubt often visited with the same summary punishment which is said to have been often inflicted on sheriffs' officers in Ireland in the last century. The sompnour, as his name implies, was the summoner, or server of summonses, answering to our modern apparitor

[2] It is strange that St. Francis and St. Dominic should not have foreseen that their rule, requiring the friars to obtain their livelihood by begging from house to house, would necessarily impair their independence of mind, and habituate them to the arts of flattery.

[3] Harl. MS., *and said the sompnour this.*

[4] Harl. MS., *leve* is omitted.

Cotton. *Cleopatra*, D. viii., fol. 110), and published by Mr. Wright in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxii.]

WHILOM there was dwellyng in my countre
An erchedeken, a man of·gret degre,
That boldely did execucioun,
In punyschyng of fornicacioun,
Of wicchecraft, and eek of bauderye,
Of diffamacioun, and avoutrie,
Of chirche-reves, and of testamentes,
Of contractes, and of lak of sacraments,[1]
And eek of many another maner cryme,
Which needith not to reherse at this tyme;

---

[1] 'Lak of sacraments' means the neglect of the Church's precept to communicate at Easter, to which sacramental confession was, in the mediæval Church, practically, though not theoretically, a necessary preliminary.

The system of ecclesiastical discipline upon which this tale is founded requires some further explanation.

In the Church of the first three centuries ecclesiastical censures had the effect of depriving the offender of spiritual privileges only.—See BINGHAM'S *Antiquities*, &c., 16, 2, 3. But when the empire became Christian, under Constantine and his successors, a new principle was gradually introduced. It was thought that the State was bound to add its *temporal*, to the Church's *spiritual*, sanctions; and the contumacious or excommunicated person was coerced by civil disabilities. After the destruction of the Roman Empire, the same legal principle was adopted by the several states of Christendom founded upon its ruins, and therefore forms an important part of mediæval jurisprudence. See a very apposite illustration of this in the first part of DE JOINVILLE'S *Memoirs of Louis IX.*, near the end.

At the Reformation, the several reformed communities adopted the same principle. The Calvinists, or Presbyterians, at Geneva, in Scotland, and in England during their short term of power, were especially zealous in enforcing it.—See Preface to HOOKER'S *Eccles. Pol.*

The canons of the Church of England, passed in 1604, which still in many respects regulate the practice of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, bear witness to the system as enforced in the reigns of the Tudors and Stuarts.—See particularly Canons 2, 65, and 112, in which the *Questman* seems to have performed many of the duties of Chaucer's sompnour. These have now become obsolete, partly from being inconsistent with recent statutes, and partly by the tacit consent of all parties.

Most of the communities of non-conformists, however, maintain a principle of discipline similar to that of the Ante-Nicene Church, their 'reading out of meeting' being exactly equivalent to the excommunication of the early ages of Christianity.

Of usur, and of symony also;
But certes lecchours did he grettest woo;
Thay schulde synge, if that they were hent;
And smale tythers thay were fouly schent,
If eny persoun wold upon hem pleyne,
Ther might astert him no pecunial peyne.
For smale tythes and for smal offrynge,[1]
He made the poeple pitously to synge.
For er the bisschop caught hem in his hook,[2]
They weren in the archedeknes book:[3]
And hadde thurgh his juredicciouu
Power to have of hem correccioun.
He had a sompnour redy to his hond,
A slyer boy was noon in Engelond;
Ful prively he had his espiaile,
That taughte him wher he might avayle.
He couthe spare of lecchours oon or tuo,
To techen him to four and twenty mo.
For though this sompnour wood were as an hare,
To telle his harlotry I wol not spare;
For we ben out of here correccioun,
They have of us no juredicciouu,[4]

[1] The neglect to pay tithes and Easter offerings came under the archdeacon's jurisdiction, as the bishop's diocesan officer. The friar does not scruple to make an invidious use of this subject at the expense of the parochial clergy, because, being obliged by his rule to gain his livelihood by begging, he had no interest in tithes.

[2] An allusion to the bishop's pastoral staff, which was in the shape of a sheep-hook. Its form and symbolical meaning are thus described in the *Vision of Piers Plowman*:—

'Dobest is above bothe,
And berith a bischopis 'crois,'
And is *hokid* on that on end
To halie men fro helle,
And a pike is in the poynt
To put adon the wyked.'

[3] Offenders were, in the first instance, summoned before the archdeacon, and afterwards, if found incorrigible, transferred to the bishop, who alone had the power of inflicting the greater excommunication.

[4] The religious orders, but particularly the mendicants or friars, were, by special dispensation of the pope, exempt from the bishop's jurisdiction, and placed under that of their general or superior only, with, of course, an appeal to the supreme pontiff. This was a fertile subject of

Ne never schul to terme of alle her lyves.
'Peter! so been the wommen of the styves,'[1]
Quod this Sompnour, 'i-put out of oure cures.'
'Pees! with meschaunce and with mesaventures,'
Thus sayd our host, 'and let him telle his tale.
Now telleth forth, although the Sompnour gale,
Ne spareth nought, myn owne maister deere.'
This false theef, the sompnour, quoth the frere,
Had alway bawdes redy to his hond,
As eny hauk to lure in Engelond,[2]
That told him al the secre that thay knewe,
For here acqueintaunce was not come of newe;
Thay were his approwours prively.
He took himself a gret profyt therby;
His maister knew nat alway what he wan.
Withoute maundement, a lewed man
He couthe sompne, up peyne of Cristes curs,
And thay were glad to fille wel his purs,
And make him grete festis atte nale.
And right as Judas[3] hadde purses smale
And was a theef, right such a theef was he,
His maister had not half his duete;
He was (if I schal give him his laude)
A theef, a sompnour, and eek a baude.
And he had wenches at his retenue,
That whethir that sir Robert or sir Hughe,[4]

---

jealousy between the several rival orders, and between them all and the parochial clergy, of which the antipathy shown by the friar and sompnour to each other is an example. So 'Jack Upland' asks the friar, 'Why be ye not under your bishop's visitation, and liegemen to our king?' The chronicles of the middle ages, especially that of *Richard of Devizes*, are filled with their mutual reproaches.

[1] The sompnour's repartee is founded upon the law by which houses of ill-fame were exempted from ecclesiastical interference, and licensed, on the principle that they were a necessary evil, and might thus be kept under better surveillance. Harl. MS. reads, *They both i-put al out*, &c.

[2] See vol. i., p. 228, note 1.

[3] Mr. Wright says, 'According to the mediæval legends, Judas was Christ's purse-bearer, and embezzled a part of the money which was given to him by his master.' These 'mediæval legends' are obviously drawn from the gospel of St. John, xii. 6.

[4] These are common names for secular clergymen. They are called

Or Jak, or Rauf, or who so that it were,
That lay by hem, thay told it in his eere.
Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent.
And he wold fecche a feyned maundement,
And sompne hem to chapitre bothe tuo,
And pyle the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he sayn, 'I schal, frend, for thy sake,
Don strike the out of oure lettres blake;
The thar no more as in this cas travayle;
I am thy frend ther I the may avayle.'
Certeynly he knew of bribours mo
Than possible is to telle in yeres tuo;
For in this world nys dogge for the bowe,[1]
That can an hurt deer from an hol y-knowe,
Bet than this sompnour knew a leccheour,
Or avoutier, or ellis a paramour;
And for that was the fruyt of al his rent,
Therfore theron he set al his entent.
And so bifel, that oones on a day
This sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,
Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,[2]
Feynyng a cause, for he wolde han a[3] bribe.
And happed that he say bifore him ryde
A gay yeman under a forest syde;
A bow he bar, and arwes bright and kene,
He had upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his heed, with frenges blake.
'Sir,' quod this sompnour, 'heyl and wel overtake!'

---

sir, not by virtue of their priestly office, but of their degree of B.A. at the university; though perhaps the title may afterwards have been given to all priests by courtesy.

[1] A dog trained for shooting with the bow, part of whose education consisted in following the stricken deer only, and separating it from the herd.

[2] See vol. i., p. 198, note 2. *Ribibe* is here put metaphorically for an old woman, perhaps, as Tyrwhitt supposes, from its shrillness.

[3] Harl. MS. omits *han a*.—W.

'Welcome,' quod he, 'and every good felawe;
Whider ridestow under this grene schawe?'
Sayde this yiman, 'Wiltow fer to day?'
This sompnour answerd, and sayde, 'Nay.
Her faste by,' quod he, 'is myn entent
To ryden, for to reysen up a rent,
That longith to my lordes duete.'
'Artow than a bayely?' 'Ye,'[1] quod he.
He durste not for verray filth and schame
Sayn that he was a sompnour, for the name.[2]
'*De par dieux!*' quod the yeman, 'lieve brother,
Thou art a bayly, and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this contre;
Of thin acqueintance I wol praye the,
And eek of brotherheed, if it yow lest.
I have gold and silver in my chest;
If that the happe come into oure schire,
Al schal be thin, right as thou wolt desire.'
'*Graunt mercy,*' quod this sompnour, 'by my faith!'
Everich in otheres hond his trouthe laith,
For to be sworne bretheren[3] til thay deyen.
In daliaunce forth thay ride and pleyen.
This sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,
As ful of venym ben these weryangles,[4]
And ever enquering upon every thing,
'Brother,' quod he, 'wher now is your dwellyng,
Another day if that I schuld yow seeche?'
This yiman him answered in softe speche:
'Brother,' quod he, 'fer in the north contre,[5]
Wheras I hope somtyme I schal the se.

---

[1] Harl. MS. omits *ye*.

[2] The friar says, the very name of sompnour bore such a note of infamy that he was ashamed to own it.

[3] See vol. i., p. 124, note 1.

[4] Apparently, from Speght's note, the shrike, or butcher bird, which is very clamorous, and feeds upon small birds, sticking them on a thorn, and so tearing them to pieces.

[5] The hell of the Teutonic race, before they were Christians, was in the north; and after their conversion, as their converters adopted

Er we depart I schal the so wel wisse,
That of myn hous ne schaltow never misse.'
'Now, brother,' quod this sompnour, 'I yow pray,
Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way,
Syn that ye ben a baily as am I,
Som subtilte as tel me faithfully
In myn office how that I may wynne.
And spare not for consciens or for synne,
But, as my brother, tel me how do ye.'
'Now, by my trouthe, brothir myn,' sayd he,
'As I schal telle the a faithful tale.
My wages ben ful streyt and eek ful smale;
My lord to me is hard[1] and daungerous,
And myn office is ful laborous;
And therfor by extorciouns I lyve,
Forsoth I take al that men wil me give,
Algate by sleighte or by violence
Fro yer to yer I wynne my despence;
I can no better telle faithfully.'
'Now certes,' quod this sompnour, 'so fare I;
I spare not to take, God it woot,
But if it be to hevy or to hoot.[2]
What I may gete in counseil prively,
No more consciens of that have I.
Nere myn extorcions,[3] I might not lyven,
Ne of such japes I wil not be schriven.
Stomak ne conscience know I noon;
I schrew thes schrifte-fadres everychoon.
Wel be we met, by God and seint Jame!
But, leve brother, telle me thy name,'
Quod this sompnour. In this mene while
This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.

---

their name, only giving the place a Christian character, it was natural that the people should retain their original notion of its position.

[1] Harl. MS., *streyt*.

[2] Tyrwhitt quotes the same expression, from Froissart: ne laissoient rien à prendre, s'il n'etoit *trop chaud*, trop froid, ou *trop pesant*.'

[3] That is, 'Were it not for my extortions.'

'Brothir,' quod he, 'woltow that I the telle?
I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,
And her I ryde about my purchasyng,
To wite wher men wol give me eny thing.
My purchas is theffect of al my rent.[1]
Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,
Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now
Unto the worldes ende for a pray.'
'A!' quod the sompnour, '*benedicite*,[2] what ye say?
I wende ye were a yeman trewely.
Ye han a mannes schap as wel as I,
Have ye a figure than determinate[3]
In helle, ther ye ben in your estate?'
'Nay, certeynly,' quod he, 'ther have we non,
But whan us likith we can take us on,
Or ellis make yow seme that we ben schape
Som tyme like a man, or like an ape;
Or lik an aungel[4] can I ryde or go;
It is no wonder thing though it be so
A lousy jogelour[5] can decyve the,
And, parfay, yit can I more craft than he.'
'Why,' quod this sompnour, 'ryde ye than or goon
In sondry wyse, and nought alway in oon?'

---

[1] My whole income is derived from what I can obtain by my trade.

[2] *Benedicite* in this and other places seems to have been colloquially contracted somehow thus: *Ben'cite*, as *God be with you* is contracted *good bye*.

[3] The friar represents the sompnour as glad of an opportunity of gaining information from a spiritual being like Satan on those metaphysical questions so eagerly discussed in the middle ages, especially by the mendicant orders which produced men of unrivalled subtlety of the reasoning power. Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican, Duns Scotus a Franciscan friar.

[4] 2 Cor. xi. 14.

[5] The minstrels were called also *jogelours*, and united with their musical entertainments the arts of legerdemain. Thus the minstrel Taillefer accompanied his song of Roland at the battle of Hastings with tricks of dexterity, which the beholders attributed to enchantment. Merlin and Thomas of Erceldoun are examples of this strange conjunction of characters.

'For,' quod he, 'we wol us in such forme make,
As most abil[1] is oure pray to take.'
'What makith yow to have al this labour?'
'Ful many a cause, lieve sir sompnour,'
Sayde this feend. 'But al thing hath a tyme;
The day is schort, and it is passed prime,
And yit ne wan I nothing in this day;
I wol entent to wynnyng, if I may,
And not entende oure thinges to declare;
For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare
To understond, although I told hem the.
For but thou axid whi laboure we;
For som tyme we ben Goddis instrumentes,
And menes to don his comaundementes,
Whan that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers act and in divers figures.
Withouten him we have no might certeyn,
If that him liste stonde ther agayn.
And som tyme at our prayer have we leeve,
Only the body, and not the soule greve;[2]
Witness on Jobe, whom we dide ful wo.
And som tyme have we might on bothe tuo,
This is to say of body and soule eeke.
And som tyme be we suffred for to seeke
Upon a man, and doon his soule unrest
And not his body, and al is for the best.
Whan he withstondith oure temptacioun,
It is a cause of his savacioun,
Al be it so it was nought oure entent
He schuld be sauf, but that we wold him hent.
And som tyme we ben servaunt unto man,
As to therchebisschop seynt Dunstan,[3]
And to thapostolis, servaunt was I.'[4]
'Yit tel me,' quod the sompnour, 'faithfully,

[1] *Abil* is a French word (*habile*, handy, dexterous), and is, therefore, accented on the last syllable. [2] Job ii. 6.
[3] St. Dunstan is said to have reduced the fiend to obedience when he came to tempt him as he was working in his forge.
[4] Perhaps an allusion to Acts xix. 14.

Make ye yow newe bodies alway
Of elementz?' The fend answerde, 'Nay;
Som tyme we feyne, and som tyme we ryse
With dede bodies,[1] in ful wonder wyse,
And speke renably, and as fair and wel
As to the Phitonissa dede Samuel;[2]
And yit wol somme say, it was not he.
I do no fors of your divinite.
But oon thing warne I the, I wol not jape,
Thou wilt algates wite how we ben schape:
Thow schalt herafter-ward, my brother deere,
Com, wher the nedith nothing for to leere,
For thou schalt by thin oughn experience
Conne in a chayer[3] reden of this sentence
Bet than Virgile,[4] whils he was on lyve,
Or Daunt also. Now let us ryde blyve,
For I wol holde company with the,
Til it be so that thou forsake me.'
'Nay,' quod the sompnour, 'that schal nought betyde.
I am a yiman that knoweu is ful wyde;
My trouthe wol I holde, as in this caas.
For though thou be the devyl Sathanas,

---

[1] The prevailing belief that the Evil Spirit sometimes appeared in the form of the departed is illustrated by *Hamlet's* doubts respecting his father's appearance, act ii. scene 2:—

'The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil; and the devil hath power
To *assume a pleasing shape*.'

[2] It was generally believed by theologians that the Witch of Endor could not really recal Samuel from the grave, but that the Evil Spirit appeared in his form, in order to give credit to the idolatry and witchcraft by which Saul and the Israelites were seduced from the worship of the true God. She is here called *Phitonissa*, because *Python*, or Apollo, was the God of Prophecy. Thus, in the Acts, xvi. 16, the words translated in our version—a spirit of *Divination*, are, in the original, πνεῦμα Πύθωνος.

[3] That is, you shall hereafter understand this subject so well that you will be competent to give lectures on it, as a professor in his chair.

[4] Alluding to the visit of Æneas to the infernal regions, in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, and to Dante's *Inferno*.

My trouthe wol I holde to the, my brother,
As I am swore, and ech of us to other,
For to be trewe bretheren in this caas;
For bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.
Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the gyven,
And I schal myn, thus may we bothe lyven.
And if eny of us have more than other,
Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.'
'I graunte,' quod the devel, 'by my fay!'
And with that word thay riden forth her way;
And right at thentryng of a townes ende,
To which this sompnour schope him for to wende,
Thay seigh a cart, that chargid was with hay,
Which that a carter drof forth in his way.
Deep was the way, for which the carte stood;
This carter smoot, and cryde as he wer wood,
'Hayt, brok; hayt, scot;[1] what spare ye for the stoones?
The fend,' quod he, 'yow fech body and bones,
As ferforthly as ever wer ye folid!
So moche wo as I have with yow tholid!
The devyl have al, bothe cart and hors and hay!'
This sompnour sayde, 'Her schal we se play.'
And ner the feend he drough, as nought ne were,
Ful prively, and rouned in his eere,
'Herke, my brother, harke, by thi faith!
Ne herest nought thou what the carter-saith?
Hent it anoon, for he hath given it the,
Bothe hay and caples, and eek his cart, parde!'
'Nay,' quod the devyl, 'God wot, never a del,
It is nought his entente, trustith wel,
Ask it thiself, if thou not trowist me,
Or ellis stint a while and thou schalt se.'

---

[1] *Hayt* is still the word used by waggoners in Norfolk to make their horses go on. *Brok* (brock) means a badger; hence applied to a grey horse, afterwards called by the carter 'myn oughne *lyard* (grey) boy! *Scot* is a common name for farm horses in East Anglia. The *Reeve's* horse (see *Prologe*) is called Scot. The Harl. MS. reads *stot* (stallion); but Scot (adopted from Tyrwhitt), being a proper name, seems the true reading.

This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
And thay bygon to drawen and to stowpe.
'Hayt now,' quod he, 'ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse,
And al his hondwerk, bothe more and lesse!
That was wel twight, myn oughne lyard boy,
I pray God save thy body and seint Loy![1]
Now is my cart out of the sloo parde!'
'Lo! brother,' quod the feend, 'what told I the?
Her may ye seen, myn owne deere brother,
The carter spak oon thing, and thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our viage;
Hier wynne I nothing upon cariage.'
Whan that thay comen somwhat out of toune,
This sompnour to his brothir gan to roune;
'Brothir,' quod he, 'her wonyth an old rebekke,
That had almost as lief to leese hir necke,
As for to give a peny of hir good.
I wol han twelf pens[2] though that sche go wood,
Or I wol somone hir to oure office;
And yit, God wot, I know of hir no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this contre,
Wynne thy cost, tak her ensample of me.'
This sompnour clapped at the widowes gate;
'Com out,' quod he, 'thou olde viritrate;
I trowe thou hast som frere or prest with the.'
'Who clappith ther?' sayd this widow, '*benedicite*
God save yow, sir! what is your swete wille?'
'I have,' quod he, 'a somonaunce of a bille,

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[1] Thus the *Book of Homilies*, in enumerating the different forms of invoking the saints, gives, as an example, 'to the horse, God and Saint Loy save thee.' This is probably a contraction for Eligius, who was originally a worker in metals, and therefore might be supposed to retain an interest in the horses he had been accustomed to shoe.

[2] Harl. MS., by a curious contraction, reads *wolf*, for *wol han twelf*.—W. The value of the twelve pence for which the sompnour sued the widow may be estimated by the relative prices of food and labour. For twelve pence the widow might have purchased two dozen of hens, or three gallons of red wine, or hired a dozen common labourers for twelve days. See vol. i., p. 33, note 1.

Up payne of cursyng,[1] loke that thou be
To morwe biforn our erchedeknes kne,
To answer to the court of certeyn thinges.'
'Now,' quod sche, 'Jhesu Crist, and king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.
I may not goon so fer,' quod sche, 'ne ryde,
But I be deed, so prikith it in my syde.
May I nat aske a lybel,[2] sir sompnour,
And answer ther by my procuratour
To suche thing as men wol oppose me?'
'Yis,' quod this sompnour, 'pay anoon, let se,
Twelf pens[3] to me, and I the wil acquite.
I schal no profyt have therby but lite;
My mayster hath the profyt and not I.
Com of, and let me ryden hastily;
Gif me my twelf pens, I may no lenger tary.'
'Twelf pens?' quod sche, 'now lady seinte Mary
So wysly help me out of care and synne,
This wyde world though that I schulde wynne,
Ne have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold.
Ye knowen wel that I am pore and old;
Kithe youre almes on me pore wrecche.'
'Nay than,' quod he, 'the foule fend me fecche!
If I thexcuse, though thou schalt be spilt.'
'Allas!' quod sche, 'God wot, I have no gilt.'
'Pay me,' quod he, 'or by the swet seint Anne!
As I wol bere away thy newe panne
For dette, which thou owest me of old,
Whan that thou madest thin housbond cokewold,
I payd at hom for thy correccioun.'
'Thou lixt,' quod sche, 'by my savacioun,
Ne was I never er now, wydow ne wyf,
Somound unto your court in al my lyf;

[1] On pain of excommunication.

[2] A copy of the information or indictment. A libel is still the expression in the ecclesiastical courts.

[3] See *ante*, p. 99, note 2.

Ne never I was but of my body trewe.
Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe
Give I thy body and the panne also!'
And whan the devyl herd hir curse so
Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manere:
'Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,
Is this your wil in ernest that ye seye?'
'The devel,' quod sche, 'fecche him er he deye,
And panne and al, but he wol him repente!'
'Nay, olde stot, that is not myn entente,'
Quod this sompnour, 'for to repente me
For eny thing that I have had of the;
I wold I had thy smok and every cloth.'
'Now brothir,' quod the devyl, 'be not wroth;
Thy body and this panne is myn by right.'[1]
Thow schalt with me to helle yit to night,
Wher thou schalt knowen of our privete
More than a maister of divinite.'
And with that word the foule fend him hente;
Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,
Wher as the sompnours han her heritage;
And God that maked after his ymage
Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,
And leeve this sompnour good man to bycome.
'Lordyngs, I couth han told yow,' quod the frere,
'Had I had leysir for this sompnour here,
After the text of Crist, and Powel, and Jon,
And of oure other doctours many oon,
Such peynes that our herte might agrise,
Al be it so, no tonge may devyse,
Though that I might a thousand wynter telle,
The peyn of thilke cursed hous of helle.
But for to kepe us from that cursed place,
Wakith, and prayeth Jhesu for his grace,

[1] The widow's curse, being uttered from her heart, gives the Devil a right to carry away the sompnour. This condition, which agrees exactly with the Latin story published by Mr. Wright in the *Archæologia*, did not apply to the curse of the carter, who 'spak oon thing, and thought another.'

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So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
Herknith this word, beth war as in this cas.
The lyoun syt in his awayt alway[1]
To slen the innocent, if that he may.
Disposith youre hertes to withstonde
The fend, that wolde make yow thral and bonde;
He may not tempte yow over your might,[2]
For Crist wol be your champioun and knight;
And prayeth, that oure Sompnour him repente
Of his mysdede, er that the fend him hente.'

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGE.

THIS Sompnour in his styrop up he stood,
Upon the Frere his herte was so wood,
That lyk an aspen leef he quok for ire.
'Lordyngs,' quod he, 'but oon thing I desire;
I yow biseke, that of your curtesye,
Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye,
As suffrith me I may my tale telle.
This Frere bosteth that he knowith helle,
And, God it wot, that is litil wonder,
Freres and feendes been but litel asonder.
For, pardy, ye han often tyme herd telle,
How that a frere ravyscht was to helle[3]
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an aungel lad him up and doun,
To schewen him the peynes that ther were,
In al the place saugh he not a frere,
Of other folk he saugh y-nowe in wo.
Unto this aungel spak this frere tho:

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[1] Psalm x. 9. [2] 1 Cor. x. 13.

[3] A favourite mode of awakening the careless in the middle ages. Bede relates a story of a monk thus favoured with a glimpse of the other world, upon whom it made such an impression that he never after was seen to smile. The idea is probably derived from the descent, in the *Odyssey* and *Æneid*, of Ulysses and Æneas into the infernal regions.

'Now, sire,' quod he, 'han freres such a grace,
That noon of hem schal comen in this place?'
'Yis,' quod this aungil, 'many a mylioun.'
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
'And now hath Sathanas,' saith he, 'a tayl
Broder than of a carrik is the sayl.'
'Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas,' quod he,
'Schew forth thyn ers, and let the frere se
Wher is the nest of freres in this place.'
And er than half a forlong way of space,
Right so as bees swarmen out of an hyve,
Out of the develes ers thay gonne dryve,
Twenty thousand freres on a route,
And thorughout helle swarmed al aboute,
And comen agen, as fast as thay may goon,
And in his ers thay crepen everichoon.
He clappid his tayl agayn, and lay ful stille.
This frere, whan he loked had his fille
Upon the torment of this sory place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Unto his body agayn, and he awook;
But natheles for fere yit he quook,
So was the develes ers yit in his mynde,
That is his heritage of verray kynde.
God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere;
My prologe wol I ende in this manere.'

THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

LORDYNGS, ther is in Engelond, I gesse,
A mersschly lond called Holdernesse,[1]
In which ther went a lymytour aboute
To preche,[2] and eek to begge, it is no doubte.

[1] A district on the coast of Yorkshire.

[2] The object of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic, the founders of the mendicant orders, was to supply the want of popular preaching and active zeal, to which the parochial and older monastic systems

And so bifel it on a day this frere
Had preched at a chirch in this manere,
And specially aboven every thing
Excited he the poepul in his preching
To trentals,[1] and to give for Goddis sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
Ther as divine servys is honoured,
Nought ther as it is wasted and devoured;
Neither it needeth not for to be give
As to possessioneres,[2] that mow lyve,
Thanked be God, in wele and abundaunce.
'Trentals,' sayd he, 'delyvereth fro penaunce
Her frendes soules, as wel eld as yonge,
Ye, whanne that thay hastily ben songe,
Nought for to hold a prest jolif and gay,
He syngith not but oon masse in a day.
Delyverith out,' quod he, 'anoon[3] the soules.
Ful hard it is, with fleischhok or with oules'
To ben y-clawed, or brend, or i-bake;[4]
Now speed yow hastily for Cristes sake.'

---

were not, as they supposed, practically conducive. They proposed to attain this object by raising up a class of men who should be unshackled by worldly possessions or hopes of preferment, and who, by their education, should be enabled to satisfy the awakening thirst for knowledge among the people. The friars, therefore, as indicated in the text, were the popular preachers of the middle ages; and there can be no doubt that the general diffusion of a knowledge of Scripture, and the discussion of religious subjects by the lower classes, to which their preachings gave rise, prepared the popular mind for forming a decision respecting those metaphysical questions upon which the Reformation was ostensibly founded.

[1] Thirty masses celebrated for the benefit of souls in purgatory.

[2] The friar invidiously calls the monks, who could possess property in common, and the parochial clergy, who of course possessed it as laymen did, *possessioners*. The friars, by their rule, were obliged to beg their bread, but so irrational a rule was, as might be expected, soon evaded.

[3] Harl. MS. omits *anoon*.

[4] The popular preachers and painters of the middle ages used to represent the punishments of sin as consisting of a literal tearing, burning, and freezing of the flesh, intending them to be understood metaphorically; but the unlearned of course applied these representations in a literal sense. In Albert Durer's 'Der Kleine Passion' is a very curious example.

And whan this frere had sayd al his entent,
With *qui cum patre*,[1] forth his way he went.
Whan folk in chirch had give him what hem lest,
He went his way, no lenger wold he rest,
With scrip and pyked staf, y-touked hye;
In every hous he gan to pore and prye,
And beggyd mele or chese, or ellis corn.
His felaw had a staf typped with horn,
A payr of tablis al of yvory,[2]
And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,
And wroot the names alway as he stood
Of alle folk that gaf him eny good,
Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
'Gif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichil,[3] or a trip of chese,
Or elles what yow list, we may not chese;
A Goddes halpeny, or a masse peny;[4]
Or gif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,
A dagoun of your blanket, leeve dame,
Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name—
Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde.'
A stourdy harlot ay went hem byhynde,

---

[1] This is part of the formula with which prayers and sermons are still sometimes concluded in the Church of England.

[2] Thus Jacke Upland asks the supposed friar, 'Why writest thou her names in thy tables that yeveth thee mony? sith God knoweth al thing: for it semeth by thy writing, that God would not reward hem; but thou writest in thy tables, God would els forgotten it.' The meaning of recording the names, however, was that they might be remembered in the prayers of the brotherhood.

[3] Tyrwhitt, after showing the absurdity of Speght's interpretation of this expression, says that it is common in French, and that the meaning is explained by M. de la Monnoye, in a note upon the *Contes de B. D. Periers*, tom. ii., p. 107:—'Rien n'est plus commun dans la bouche des bonnes vieilles, que ces especes d'Hebraismes: "Il m'en coûte un bel écu de Dieu; il ne me reste que ce pauvre enfant de Dieu; donnez-moi une benite aumône de Dieu."'

[4] *A masse peny* is probably a penny for saying a mass. Thus, Jacke Upland:—'Freer, when thou receivest a penie for to say a masse, whether sellest thou God's bodie?' &c. He might as well have said that St. Paul sold the Gospel because he sometimes accepted pecuniary aid from his converts.

That was her hostis[1] man, and bar a sak,
And what men gaf hem, layd it on his bak.
And whan that he was out atte dore, anoon
He planed out the names everychoon,
That he biforn had writen in his tablis;
He served hem with nyfles and with fablis. [Frere.
'Nay, ther thou lixt,[2] thou Sompnour,' sayd the
'Pees,' quod our host, 'for Cristes moder deere,
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it not at al.'
'So thrive I,' quod the Sompnour, 'so I schal!'
So long he wente hous by hous, til he
Cam til an hous, ther he was wont to be
Refresshid mor than in an hundrid placis.
Syk lay the housbond man, whos that the place is,
Bedred upon a couche lowe he lay.
'*Deus hic*,'[3] quod he, 'O Thomas, frend, good day!'
Sayde this frere al curteysly and softe.
'O Thomas, God yeld it yow, ful ofte
Have I upon this bench i-fare ful wel,
Her have I eten many a mery mel.'
And fro the bench he drof away the cat,[4]
And layd adoun his potent and his hat,
And eek his scrip, and set him soft adoun;
His felaw was go walkid in the toun
Forth with his knave, into the ostelrye,
Wher as he schop him thilke night to lye.

[1] In all religious houses there was an officer specially appointed to wait on the guests, called here the 'hostisman,' or guests' man, *host*, like the Latin *hospes*, meaning both host and guest.

[2] The friar's vehement denial is admirably managed. The general resemblance of the sompnour's picture is so perfect, that even he is carried away by its spirit, and believes it real; but he thinks he can at least dispute the trifling circumstance of the blotting out of the names.

[3] God be here, apparently a form of benediction. It is a common phrase amongst the peasantry in Ireland and Brittany to say, on entering a house, 'God save all here.'

[4] It is by this sort of by-play that Chaucer gives such a marvellous reality to his scenes. He does not say that the friar made himself quite at home, but he makes you *see* it with your eyes.

'O deere maister,' quod the seeke man,
'How have ye fare siththe March bygan?
I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more.'
'God wot,' quod he, 'labord have I ful sore;
And specially for thy salvacioun
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have to day ben at your chirche at messe,
And sayd a sermoun after my simple wit,
Nought al after the text of holy wryt.
For it is hard for yow, as I suppose,
And therfor wil I teche yow ay the glose.
Glosyng is a ful glorious thing certayn,
For letter sleth,[1] so as we clerkes sayn.
Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,
And spend her good ther it is resonable;
And ther I seigh our dame, wher is she?'
'Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,'
Sayde this man, 'and sche wil come anoon.'
'Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan!'
Sayde this wyf, 'how fare ye hertily?'
The frere ariseth up ful curteysly,
And her embracith[2] in his armes narwe,
And kist hir swete, and chirkith as a sparwe
With his lippes: 'Dame,' quod he, 'right wel,
As he that is your servaunt everydel.
Thankyd be God, that yow gaf soule and lif,
Yit saugh I not this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me.'
'Ye, God amend defautes,[3] sir,' quod sche,
'Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.'
'*Graunt mercy*, dame; this have I found alway.

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[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6.

[2] Kissing was formerly the ordinary mode of salutation, as it still is in some parts of the continent.

[3] A sort of modest *disqualifying* of herself, as much as to say, 'I know I have many faults, but may God amend them.'

But of your grete goodnes, by youre leve,
I wolde pray yow that ye yow not greeve,
I wil with Thomas speke a litel throwe;
These curates[1] ben ful negligent and slowe
To grope tendurly a conscience.
In schrift and preching[2] is my diligence,
And study in Petres wordes and in Poules,
I walk and fissche[3] Cristen mennes soules,
To yelde Jhesu Crist his propre rent;
To spreden his word is al myn entent.'
'Now, by your leve, o deere sir,' quod sche,
'Chyd him right wel for seinte Trinite.[4]
He is as angry as a pissemyre,
Though that he have al that he can desire,
Though I him wrye on night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg other myn arm,
He groneth lik our boor, that lith in sty.
Othir disport of him right noon have I,
I may please him in no maner caas.'
'O Thomas, *jeo vous dy*, Thomas, Thomas,
This makth the feend, this moste ben amendid.
Ire is a thing that highe God defendid,
And therof wold I speke a word or tuo.'
'Now, maister,' quod the wyf, 'er that I go,
What wil ye dine? I will go theraboute.'
'Now, dame,' quod he, '*jeo vous dy saunz doute*,
Have I not of a capoun but the lyvere,
And of your softe brede but a schivere,

---

[1] The secular or parochial clergy, who had *cure* (cura) of souls, which the religious orders could not properly be said to have, because their jurisdiction was not confined to the ordinary limits, but extended, like that of a missionary, to whomsoever they could persuade.

[2] The friars, like the modern Jesuits, turned their attention particularly to the popular parts of theology, preaching, and the direction of consciences.

[3] Luke v. 10.

[4] *Saint* means properly *holy*, and so is applied to the Trinity, the Saviour, charity, &c., as well as to Christian men and women. Seinte is the feminine form of the adjective, to agree with Trinite, a feminine noun in Latin and French.

And after that a rostyd pigges heed,
(But that I wold for me no best were deed[1])
Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.
I am a man of litel sustinaunce.
My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.
The body is ay so redy and so penyble
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
I pray yow, dame, that ye be not anoyed,
For I so frendly yow my counseil schewe;
By God! I nold not telle it but a fewe.'
'Now, sir,' quod sche, 'but o word er I go.
My child is deed withinne this wykes tuo,
Soon after that ye went out of this toun.'
'His deth saugh I by revelacioun,'
Sayde this frere, 'at hoom in oure dortour.
I dar wel sayn, er that half an hour
After his deth, I seigh him born to blisse
In myn avysioun, so God me wisse.
So did our sextein, and our fermerere,[2]
That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;
Thay may now, God be thanked of his lone,
Maken her jubile,[3] and walk alloone.
And up I roos, and al our covent eeke,
With many a teere trilling on my cheeke,
Te Deum[4] was our song, and nothing ellis,
Withouten noys or clatering of bellis,

[1] This is perhaps in imitation of his founder, St. Francis, whose charity overflowed even upon the lower animals, whom he called his brothers and sisters, insomuch that he could not be prevailed upon to remove certain of them which found shelter in the folds of his ample hood.

[2] The officer who had charge of the farms or granges. In Jacke Upland is exposed the sophistry by which the friars endeavoured to reconcile the possession of farms with their 'rule.'

[3] Peculiar honours and privileges were granted by the rule of St. Benedict to those monks who had lived fifty years in the order, and who were then said to have finished their jubilee. One of these privileges was that of walking alone, which, for obvious reasons, was forbidden to the other religious. So in Jacke Upland:—'What betokeneth that ye goe tweine and tweine together?'

Nothing but a thanksgiving would have been appropriate for a

Save that to Crist I sayd an orisoun,
Thankyng him of my revelacioun.
For, sire and dame, trustith me right wel,
Our orisouns ben more effectuel,
And more we se of Goddis secre thinges,
Than borel folk, although that thay ben kinges.
We lyve in povert and in abstinence,
And borel folk in riches and dispence
Of mete and drink, and in her ful delyt.
We han all this worldes lust al[1] in despyt.
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversely,
And divers guerdoun hadde thay thereby.
Who so wol praye, he must faste,[2] and be clene,
And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.
We faren, as saith thapostil;[3] cloth and foode
Sufficeth us, though that thay ben not goode.
The clennes and the fastyng of us freres
Makith that Crist acceptith oure prayeres.
Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty night
Fasted,[4] er that the highe God of might
Spak with him in the mount of Synay;
With empty wombe fastyng many a day,
Receyved he the lawe, that was writen
With Goddis fynger; and Eli,[5] wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, er he had any speche
With highe God, that is oure lyves leche,
He fastid, and was in contemplacioun.
Aron, that had the temple in governacioun,
And eek the other prestes[6] everychoon,
Into the temple whan thay schulden goon
To preye for the poeple, and doon servise,
Thay nolden drinken in no maner wise

---

child dying in infancy, of whose translation to paradise the friar also pretends that he had had a vision.

[1] Harl. MS. *delit.*
[2] Harl. MS. omits *he must.*
[3] 1 Tim. vi. 8.
[4] Exod. xxxiv. 28.
[5] 1 Kings xix. 8.
[6] Levit. x. 9.

No drynke, which that dronke might hem make,
But ther in abstinence prey and wake,
Lest that thay dedin; tak heed what I say—
But thay ben sobre[1] that for the pepul pray—
War that I say—no mor; for it suffisith.
Oure Lord Jhesu, as oure lore devysith,
Gaf us ensampil of fastyng and prayeres;
Therfore we mendinauntz, we sely freres,
Ben wedded to povert and to continence,
To charite, humblesse, and abstinence,
To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
To wepyng, misericord, and clennesse.
And therfor may ye seen that oure prayeres
(I speke of us, we mendeaunts, we freres)
Ben to the hihe God more acceptable
Than youres, with your festis at your table.
Fro Paradis first, if I schal not lye,
Was man out chaced for his glotonye,
And chast was man in Paradis certeyn.
But now herk, Thomas, what I schal the seyn,
I ne have no tixt of it, as I suppose,
But I schal fynd it in a maner glose;
That specially our swete Lord Jhesus
Spak this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
Blessed be thay that pover in spirit ben.[2]
And so forth in the gospel ye may seen,
Whether it be likir oure professioun,
Or heris that swymmen in possessioun.
Fy on her pomp, and on her glotenye,
And on her lewydnesse! I hem defye.
Me thinkith thay ben lik Jovynian,[3]
Fat as a whal, and walken as a swan;
Al vinolent as botel in the spence.[4]
Her prayer is of ful gret reverence;

[1] An insinuation that the parochial clergy did not lead very sober lives.
[2] Matt. v. 3.
[3] Probably the fabulous Emperor of Rome in one of the *Gesta Romanorum*.
[4] As full of wine as a bottle in the cellar or buttery.

Whan thay for soules sayn the Psalm of David,
Lo, boef thay say, *Cor meum eructavit.*[1]
Who folwith Cristes gospel and his lore
But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,
Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?[2]
Therfor right as an hauk upon a sours[3]
Upspringeth into thaer, right so prayeres
Of charitabil and chaste busy freres
Maken her sours to Goddis eeres tuo.
Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ryde or go,
And by that Lord that clepid is seint Ive,[4]
Ner thou oure brother, schuldestow never thrive.
In oure chapitre pray we day and night
To Crist, that he the sende hele and might
Thy body for to welden hastily.'
'God wot,' quod he, 'therof nought feele I,
As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeeres
Have spendid upon many divers freres
Ful many a pound, yit fare I never the bet;
Certeyn my good have I almost byset.
Farwel my gold, for it is almost ago.'
The frere answerd, 'O Thomas, dostow so?
What needith yow dyverse freres seche?
What needith him that hath a parfyt leche
To sechen othir leches in the toun?
Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
Holde ye than me, or elles oure covent,
To praye for yow insufficient?
Thomas, that jape is not worth a myte;
Youre malady is for we have to lite.
A! give that covent half a quarter otes;
A! give that covent four and twenty grotes;

---

[1] The forty-fifth Psalm in the Vulgate begins *Eructavit cor meum*; and the pun is on the word *eructavit*. The priests are said to say 'for soules' because it is one of the psalms in the *Officium defunctorum*.

[2] James i. 22.

[3] Like a falcon soaring, which she always does before swooping down upon her prey.

[4] St. Ive was an exemplary priest of Lantriguier, in Bretagne.

A! give that frere a peny, and let him go;
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may nought be so.
What is a ferthing worth depart in tuelve?
Lo, ech thing that is ooned in himselve
Is more strong than whan it is to-skatrid.
Thomas, of me thou schalt not ben y-flatrid,
Thow woldist have our labour al for nought.
The hihe God, that al this world hath wrought
Saith, that the werkman is worthy of his hyre.[1]
Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire
As for myself, but for that oure covent
To pray for yow is ay so diligent;
And for to buylden Cristes holy chirche.
Thomas, if ye wil lerne for to wirche,
Of buyldyng up on chirches may ye fynde
If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Ynde.[2]
Ye lye her ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devel set your hert on fuyre,
And chyden her the holy innocent
Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
And therfor trow me, Thomas, if thou list,
Ne stryve nought with thy wyf, as for thi best.
And ber this word away now by thy faith,
Touchinge such thing, lo, the wise man saith,
Withinne thin hous be thou no lyoun;[3]
To thy subjects do noon oppressioun;
Ne make thyn acqueyntis fro the fle.
And yit, Thomas, eftsons I charge the,

[1] Luke x. 7.

[2] Ecclesiastical history says that the Apostle Thomas was the evangelist of the Indies, and recommended himself to a sovereign of that country by his skill in building. This is confirmed by the tradition preserved among the native Christians whom the early European settlers found in the country, and who are called the Christians of St. Thomas to this day; and also by the extraordinary similarity between some of the doctrines and forms of Hindooism and Buddhism and those of Christianity, which would lead one to suppose that the latter had at some time been received at least *in conjunction* with an old idolatry.

[3] Ecclus. iv. 30.

Be war for ire that in thy bosom slepith,
War for the serpent, that so slely crepith
Under the gras, and styngith prively;
Be war, my sone, and werk paciently,
For twenty thousend men han lost her lyves
For stryvyng with her lemmans and her wyves.
Now syns ye han so holy and meeke a wif,
What nedith yow, Thomas, to make strif?
Ther nys i-wis no serpent so cruel,
When men trede on his tail, ne half so fel,
As womman is, when sche hath caught an ire;
Vengeans is thanne al that thay desire.
Schortly may no man, by rym and vers,
Tellen her thoughtes, thay ben so dyvers.
Ire is a sinne, oon the grete of sevene,[1]
Abhominable to the God of hevene,
And to himself it is destruccioun.
This every lewed vicory or parsoun[2]
Can say, how ire engendrith homicide;
Ire is in soth executour of pride.
I couthe of ire seyn so moche sorwe,
My tale schulde laste til to morwe.
Ire is the grate of synne, as saith the wise,[3]
To fle therfro ech man schuld him devyse.
And therfor pray I God bothe day and night,
An irous man God send him litil might.
It is greet harm, and also great pite,
To sęt an irous man in high degre.

---

[1] One of the greatest of the seven deadly sins.

[2] The friar characteristically calls the parson and vicar *lewd*, that is, unlearned. The parson is properly the *parish priest*, or rector; the *vicar* a substitute appointed by the religious house to which the great tithes were sometimes granted, on condition that they provided for the cure of souls in the parish. At the dissolution of the abbeys, these great tithes were given, or played away at dice, to laymen by Henry VIII., and are now still held by laymen, who, like the old monasteries, give the small tithes to the vicar or substitute.

[3] This apparently ought to be the *gate*, meaning flood-gate, of sin. The allusion will be to Prov. xvii. 14.

'Whilom ther was an irous potestate,
As seith Senek,[1] that duryng his estaat
Upon a day out riden knightes tuo;
And, as fortune wolde right as it were so,
That oon of hem cam home, that other nought.
Anoon the knight bifore the juge is brought,
That sayde thus, Thou hast thy felaw slayn,
For which I deme the to deth certayn
And to anothir knight comaundid he,
Go, lede him to the deth, I charge the.
And happed, as thay wente by the weye
Toward the place ther he schulde deye,
The knight com, which men wend hadde be deed.
Than thoughten thay it were the beste reed
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.
Thay sayden, Lord, the knight hath not slayn
His felaw; lo, heer he stont hool on lyve.
Ye schal be deed, quod he, so mote I thrive!
That is to sayn, bothe oon, tuo, and thre.
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he;
I deme the, thou most algate be deed.
Than thoughte thay it were the beste rede,
To lede him forth into a fair mede.
And, quod the juge, also thou most lese thin heed,
For thou art cause why thy felaw deyth.
And to the thridde felaw thus he seith;
Thou hast nought doon that I comaundid the.
And thus he let don sle hem alle thre.
Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
And ay delited him to ben a schrewe;
And so bifel, a lord of his meigne,
That loved vertues, and eek moralite,
Sayd on a day bitwix hem tuo right thus,
A lord is lost, if he be vicious;

[1] This and the following story of Cambyses are told by Seneca, *De Irâ*, lib. i. c. xvi.—T.

An irous man is lik a frentik best,
In which ther is of wisdom noon arrest;
And dronkenes is eek a foul record
Of any man, and namly of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eyghe and many an eere
Awaytand on a lord, and he not where.
For Goddes love, drynk more attemperelly:
Wyn makith man to lese wrecchedly
His mynde, and eek his lymes everichoon.
The revers schaltow seen, quod he, anoon,
And prove it by thin owne experience,
That wyn ne doth to folk non such offence.
Ther is no won byreveth me my might
Of hond, of foot, ne of myn eyghe sight.
And for despyt he dronke moche more
An hundrid part than he had doon byfore;
And right anoon, this irous cursid wrecche
Let this knightes sone anoon biforn him fecche,
Comaundyng hem thay schuld biforn him stonde;
And sodeinly he took his bowe on honde,
And up the streng he pulled to his eere,
And with an arwe he slough the child right there.
Now whethir have I a sikur hond or noon?
Quod he, Is al my mynde and might agoon?
Hath wyn byrevyd me myn eye sight?
What schuld I telle the answer of the knight?
His sone was slayn, ther is no more to say.
Be war therfor with lordes how ye play,
Syngith *Placebo*,[1] and I schal if I can.
But if it be unto a pore man;
To a pore man men schuld his vices telle,
But not to a lord, they he schuld go to helle.

---

[1] *Placebo Domino, in regione vivorum* is the rendering in the Vulgate of that passage which, in the authorized version, is translated 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' It was familiar to everyone in Chaucer's time, as it formed one of the antiphons in the office for the dead; and to sing *placebo* means to be humble and complaisant.

Lo, irous Cirus[1] thilke Percien,
How he destruyed the ryver of Gysen,
For that an hors of his was dreynt theriinne,
Whan that he wente Babiloyne to wynne:
He made that the ryver was so smal,
That wommen mighte wade it over al.
Lo, what sayde he, that so wel teche can?[2]
Ne be no felaw to an irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the way,
Lest the repent. I wel no lenger say.
Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
Thow schalt me fynde as just as is a squire;
Thyn anger doth the al to sore smerte,
Hald not the develes knyf ay at thyn herte,[3]
But schewe to me al thy confessioun.'

'Nay,' quod this syke man, 'by seynt Symoun,
I have ben schriven this day of my curate:[4]
I have him told holly al myn estate.
Nedith no more to speken of it, saith he,
But if me list of myn humilite.'

'Gif me than of thy good to make our cloyster,'
Quod he, 'for many a muscle and many an oyster
Hath ben oure foode, our cloyster to arreyse,
Whan other men han ben ful wel at eyse;'
And yit, God wot, unnethe the foundement
Parformed is, ne of oure pavyment
Is nought a tyle[5] yit withinne our wones;
By God, we owe yit fourty pound for stones.

---

[1] This story of Cyrus is told in Seneca, and Herodotus, lib. i.; but the river is called Gyndes. It is probably that mentioned in Gen. ii. 13.

[2] Prov. xxii. 24.

[3] This is very expressive of the torment of anger, and recalls Swift's epitaph—'Ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor *lacerare* nequit.' Harl. MS., *alway*.

[4] I have to-day been confessed by my parish priest;—an announcement especially displeasing to the friar.

[5] Churches and public buildings were usually floored with tiles of various colours and patterns, in the arrangement of which exquisite taste was displayed. At the introduction of the rage for pseudo-classic art, these were replaced by dingy stone.

Now help, Thomas, for him that harewed helle,
Or elles moote we oure bookes selle;
And gif yow lakke oure predicacioun,
Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
For who so wold us fro the world byreve,
So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,
He wolde byreve out of this world the sonne.
For who can teche and werken as we conne?
And this is not of litel tyme,' quod he,
'But siththen Elye was her, or Elisee,[1]
Han freres ben, fynde I of record,
In charite, i-thanked be oure Lord.
Now, Thomas, help for saynte Charite.'
Adoun he sette him anoon on his kne.

This sike man wex welneigh wood for ire,
He wolde that the frere had ben on fuyre
With his fals dissimulacioun.
'Such thing as is in my possessioun,'
Quod he, 'that may I geve yow and noon other;
Ye sayn me thus, how that I am your brother.'
'Ye certes,' quod the frere, 'trusteth wel;
I took our dame the letter,[2] under our sel.'
'Now wel,' quod he, 'and somewhat schal I give
Unto your holy convent whils that I lyve;
And in thyn hond thou schalt it have anoon,
On this condicioun, and other noon,
That thou depart it so, my deere brother,
That every frere have as moche as other,
This schaltow swere on thy professioun,
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun.'
'I swere it,' quod this frere, 'upon my faith.'
And therwith his hond in his he laith;

[1] The Harl. MS., for *Elisee*, reads *Ele*. The friars claimed Elijah and Elisha, who, it appears (1 Kings xvii), were supported on the voluntary principle, as examples of their mode of life.

[2] Thus Jacke Upland asks the friar, 'Why aske ye no letters of bretherhead of other men's praiers, as ye desire that other men aske letters of you?' And again, 'Why be ye so hardie to grant by *letters of fraternitie* to men and women, that they shall have part and merit of all your goode deeds?'

'Lo here myn hond, in me schal be no lak.'
'Now thanne, put thyn hond doun at my bak,'
Sayde this man, 'and grope wel byhynde,
Bynethe my buttok, there schaltow fynde
A thing, that I have hud in privete.'
'A!' thought this frere, 'that schal go with me.'
And doun his hond he launcheth to the clifte,
In hope for to fynde ther a gifte.
And whan this syke man felte this frere
Aboute his tuel grope ther and heere,
Amyd his hond he leet the freere a fart;
Ther is no capul drawyng in a cart,
That might have let a fart of such a soun.
The frere upstart, as doth a wood lyoun:
'A! false cherl,' quod he, 'for Goddes bones!
This hastow in despit don for the noones;
Thou schalt abye this fart, if that I may.'
His meyne, which that herd of this affray,
Com lepand in, and chased out the frere.
And forth he goth with a foul angry cheere,
And fat his felaw, there lay his stoor;
He lokid as it were a wylde boor,
And grynte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A stordy paas doun to the court[1] he goth,
Wher as ther wonyd a man of gret honour,
To whom that he was alway confessour;
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere com, as he were in a rage,
Wher that this lord sat etyng at his bord:
Unnethe might the frere speke a word,
Til atte last he sayde, 'God yow se!'[2]
This lord gan loke, and sayde, *Benedicite!*

---

[1] The residence of the lord of the manor was sometimes called 'the court,' from the manorial and other courts held there; just as the residence of the sovereign for the time being is called the court, because formerly the courts of law always followed the king's person.

[2] A laconic form of salutation, characteristic of an angry man, and meaning, May God look upon you.

What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?
I se wel that som thing is amys;
Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevys.
Sit doun anoon, and tel me what your gref is,
And it schal ben amendit, if that I may.'
'I have,' quod he, 'had a despit to day,
God yelde yow, adoun in youre vilage,
That in this world is noon so pore a page,
That he nold have abhominacioun
Of that I have receyved in youre toun;
And yet ne grevith me no thing so sore,
As that this elde cherl, with lokkes hore,
Blasphemed hath our holy covent eeke.'
'Now, maister,' quod this lord, 'I yow biseke.'
'No maister, sir,' quod he, 'but servitour,
Though I have had in scole such honour.[1]
God likith not that Raby men us calle,
Neither in market, neyther in your large halle.'
'No fors,' quod he, 'tellith me al your greef.'
This frere sayd, 'Sire, an odious meschief
This day bytid is to myn ordre and me,
And so *par consequens* to ech degre
Of holy chirche, God amend it soone!'
'Sir,' quod the lord, 'ye wot what is to doone;
Distempre yow nought, ye ben my confessour,
Ye ben the salt of therthe, and savyour:[2]
For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde;
Tel me your greef.' And he anoon him tolde
As ye han herd bifore, ye wot wel what.
The lady of that hous ay stille sat,
Til sche had herd what the frere sayde.
'Ey, Goddes moodir!' quod she, 'blisful mayde!

[1] The friar disclaims the title of Maister, as being forbidden (Matt. xiii), though he says he is entitled to it by virtue of his degree of M.A. in the schools. This is an admirable picture of an angry man; nothing pleases him, not even the courtesy of his patron the great man.

[2] Matt. v. 13.

Is ther ought elles? tel me faithfully.'
'Madame,' quod he, 'how thynke yow therby?'
'How that me thynkith?' quod sche; 'so God me speede!
I say, a cherl hath doon a cherles deede.
What schuld I say? God let him never the!
His syke heed is full of vanyte.
I hold him in a maner frenesye.'
'Madame,' quod he, 'i-wis I schal not lye,
But I in othir wise may be wreke,
I schal defame him over al wher I speke;
The false blasfememour, that chargid me
To parten that wil not departed be,
To every man y-liche, with meschaunce!'
The lord sat stille, as he were in a traunce,
And in his hert he rollid up and doun,
'How had this cherl ymaginacioun
To schewe such a probleme to the frere?
Never erst[1] er now herd I of such matiere;
I trowe the devel put it in his mynde.
In arsmetrik schal ther no man fynde
Biforn this day of such a questioun.
Who schulde make a demonstracioun,
That every man schuld have alyk his part
As of a soun or savour of a fart?
O nyce proude cherl, I schrew his face!
Lo, sires,' quod the lord, with harde grace,
'Who ever herde of such a thing er now?
To every man y-like? tel me how.
It is impossible, it may not be.
Ey, nyce cherl, God let him never the!
The romblyng of a fart, and every soun,
Nis but of aier reverberacioun,
And ever it wastith lyte and lyte away;
Ther nys no man can deme, by my fay,

[1] Harl. MS. erst.

If that it were departed equally.
What, lo, my cherl,[1] what, lo, how schrewedly
Unto my confessour to day he spak!
I hold him certeinly demoniak.
Now etith your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himself on devel way!'
Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,
That carf his mete,[2] and herde word by word
Of al this thing, which that I of have sayd.
'My lord,' quod he, 'be ye nought evel payd,
I couthe telle for a gowne-cloth
To yow, sir frere, so that ye be not wroth,
How that this fart even departed schuld be
Among your covent, if I comaunded be.'
'Tel,' quod the lord, 'and thou schalt have anoon
A goune-cloth, by God, and[3] by Seint Johan!'
'My lord,' quod he, 'whan that the wedir is fair,
Withoute wynd, or pertourbyng of ayr,
Let bring a large whel into this halle,
But loke that it have his spokes alle;
Twelf spokes hath a cart whel comunly;
And bring me twelve freres, wit ye why?
For threttene[4] is a covent as I gesse;
Your noble confessour, her God him blesse,

---

[1] This nobleman speaks of the churl as *my* churl, that is, my serf or villain. On the extinction of slavery, which thus appears to have been in force in Chaucer's time, Mr. Macaulay remarks:—'The benevolent spirit of the Christian morality is undoubtedly adverse to distinctions of caste. But to the Church of Rome such distinctions are peculiarly odious, &c.' To the influence, therefore, of the theology of the church of the middle ages, he ascribes its imperceptible disuse. He adds:—'Some faint traces of the institution of villanage were detected by the curious so late as the days of the Stuarts; nor has that institution ever, to this hour, been abolished by statute.'—*Hist. Eng.*, vol. i., p. 22.

[2] It appears that the elegant and rational practice latterly introduced, of having the dishes carved by an attendant, is a return to that of our ancestors.

[3] *And* is omitted in the Harl. MS., but it is here supplied from Tyrwhitt, as manifestly required by the sense and metre.

[4] Mr. Wright quotes from Thorn to show that a *convent* of monks, with their superior, properly consisted of thirteen, in imitation of

Schal parfourn up the nombre of this covent.
Thanne schal thay knele doun by oon assent,
And to every spokes ende in this manere
Ful sadly lay his nose schal a frere;
Your noble confessour ther, God him save,
Schal hold his nose upright under the nave.
Than schal this churl, with bely stif and tought
As eny tabor, hider ben y-brought;
And sette him on the whele of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him lete a fart,
And ye schul seen, up peril of my lif,
By verray proef that is demonstratif,
That equally the soun of it wol wende,
And eek the stynk, unto the spokes ende;
Save that this worthy man, your confessour,
(Bycause he is a man of gret honour)
Schal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.
The noble usage of freres is this,
The worthy men of hem first schal be served.
And certeynly he hath it wel deserved;
He hath to day taught us so mochil good,
With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;
And so wold al his covent hardily,
He berith him so fair and holily.'
The lord, the lady, and ech man, sauf the frere,
Sayde that Jankyn spak in this matiere
As wel as Euclide, or elles Phtolome.
Touchand the cherl, thay sayd that subtilte
And high wyt made him speken as he spak;
He nas no fool, ne no demoniak.
And Jankyn hath i-wonne a new goune;
My tale is don, we ben almost at toune.

Christ and the twelve apostles. Anno Domini M.C.XLVI., iste Hugo reparavit antiquum numerum monachorum istius monasterii, et erant lx. monachi professi præter abbatem, hoc est, *quinque conventus* in universo.—*Decem Scriptores*, col., 1807.

THE CLERK OF OXENFORDES PROLOGE.

'SIR Clerk of Oxenford,' our hoste sayde,
'Ye ryde as stille and coy as doth a mayde,
Were newe spoused, sittyng at the bord;[1]
This day ne herd I of your mouth a word.
I trowe ye study aboute som sophime;
But Salomon saith, every thing hath tyme.[2]
For Goddis sake! as beth of better cheere,
It is no tyme for to stody hiere.
Tel us som mery tale, by your fay;
For what man is entred unto play,
He moot nedes unto that play assent.
But precthith not, as freres doon in Lent,
To make us for our olde synnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us for to slepe.
Tel us som mery thing of aventures.
Youre termes, your colours, and your figures,
Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite
High style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Spekith so playn at this tyme, I yow pray,
That we may understonde what ye say.'
This worthy Clerk benignely answerde;
'Sir host,' quod he, 'I am under your yerde,[3]
Ye have of us as now the governaunce,
And therfor wol I do yow obeissaunce,
Als fer as resoun askith hardily.
I wil yow telle a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As proved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now deed, and nayled in his chest,
Now God give his soule wel good-rest!

---

[1] Tyrwhitt remarks that this line is an example of that construction, common to all writers of the age, which omits the relative pronoun.

[2] Eccles. iii. 1.

[3] *Sub ferulâ tuâ*, under your rod, a common expression to denote the state of pupillage.

Fraunces Petrark,[1] the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorique swete
Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie,
As Linian[2] did of philosophie,
Or lawue, or other art particulere;
But deth, that wol not suffre us duellen heere,
But as it were a twyncling of an ye,
Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle we schul dye.
But forth to telle of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I bigan,
I say that he first with heigh stile enditith
(Er he the body of his tale writith)
A proheme, in the which descrivith he
Piemounde, and of Saluces the contre,
And spekith of Appenyne the hulles hye,
That ben the boundes of al west Lombardye;
And of mount Vesulus in special,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal
Takith his firste springyng and his sours,
That est-ward ay encresceth in his cours
To Emyl-ward,[3] to Ferare, and to Venise,
To which a long thing were to devyse.
And trewely, as to my juggement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wold conveyen his matiere;
But this is the tale which that ye schuln heere.'

---

[1] See vol. i., p. 17, *et seq.* Even if the reader should not be disposed to think that Chaucer meant to represent himself, in the person of the clerk, as having learned this tale from the mouth of Petrarch, at Padua, yet it must be conceded that this passage looks like an acknowledgment, on the part of Chaucer himself, of the obligations under which he lay to Petrarch, gracefully introduced in the words of the clerk. One cannot conceive what object the poet could have had in the passage except to commemorate a real interview.

[2] Joannes of Lignano, near Milan, a canonist and natural philosopher, who flourished about 1378, mentioned by Panzerollus, *De Cl. Leg. Interpret.*, lib. iii. c. xxv.

[3] Petrarch speaks of the Po as dividing the Æmilian (hence Chaucer's Emyl-ward) and Flaminian regions from Venice.

THE CLERKES TALE.

[THAT the original of this story was older than Boccaccio's novel admits of no doubt. Petrarch was acquainted with it many years before it was related by Boccaccio, whom he had himself, probably, supplied with the chief incidents. But, while we have many subsequent forms of it, the novel in the *Decameron* is the earliest now known to exist. The French are entitled to the credit of having first introduced it to the stage, a play on the subject having been produced at Paris in 1393, about nineteen years after Petrarch's death. Dramas were afterwards founded upon it in Italy, Germany, and England. Chaucer's tale is the earliest narrative in our language of the woes and virtues of *Patient Grissell*, since rendered familiar to the English reader by the prominent place it occupies in our ballad literature. Few stories enjoy so wide a popularity. The incredible resignation of the heroine may be said to have passed into a proverb.

Although Chaucer was indebted to Petrarch for his materials, the story acquires originality in his hands from the sweetness and tenderness of expression he has infused into the relation. Charles James Fox, who had never seen Petrarch's version, describes with accuracy the character of this poem when he observes, in one of his letters to Lord Holland, that it closely resembles the manner of Ariosto.]

THER is at the west ende of Ytaile,
Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playn, abundaunt of vitaile,
Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde,
That foundid were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many anothir delitable sight,
And Saluces this noble contray hight.

A marquys whilom duellid in that lond,
As were his worthy eldris him bifore,
And obeisaunt ay redy to his hond,

Were alle his liegis, bothe lesse and more.
Thus in delyt he lyveth and hath don yore,
Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Bothe of his lordes and of his comune.
Therwith he was, as to speke of lynage,
The gentileste born of Lumbardye,
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curtesie;
Discret y-nough his contre for to gye,
Savynge in som thing he was to blame;
And Wautier was this yonge lordes name.
I blame him thus, that he considered nought
In tyme comyng what mighte bityde,
But on his lust present was al his thought,
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde;
Wel neigh al othir cures let he slyde,
And eek he nolde (that was the worst of al)
Wedde no wyf for no thing that might bifal.
Only that poynt his poeple bar so sore,
That flokmel on a day to him thay went,
And oon of hem, that wisest was of lore,
(Or elles that the lord wolde best assent
That he schuld telle him what his poeple ment,
Or ellis couthe he schewe wel such matiere)
He to the marquys sayd as ye schuln hiere.
'O noble marquys, youre humanite
Assureth us and giveth us hardynesse,
As ofte as tyme is of necessite,
That we to yow may telle oure hevynesse;
Acceptith, lord, now of your gentilesse,[1]
That we with pitous hert unto yow playne,
And let your eeris my vois not disdeyne.
'And have I nought to doon in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yit for as moche as ye, my lord so deere,

[1] Harl. MS., *necessitee;* a mere repetition of the last word of the preceding line but one.

Han alway schewed me favour and grace,
I dar the better ask of yow a space
Of audience, to schewen oure request,[1]
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow lest.
'For certes, lord, so wel us likith yow
And al your werk, and ever han doon, that we
Ne couthen not ourselve devysen how
We mighte lyve more in felicite;
Save oon thing, lord, if that your wille be,
That for to be a weddid man yow list,
Than were your pepel in sovereign hertes rest.
'Bowith your neck undir that blisful yok
Of sovereignete, nought of servise,
Which that men clepe spousail or wedlok;
And thenketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes passe in sondry wyse;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Ay fleth the tyme, it wil no man abyde.
'And though your grene youthe floure as yit,
In crepith age alway as stille as stoon,
And deth manasith every age, and smyt
In ech estat, for ther ascapith noon.
And as certeyn, as we knowe everychon
That we schuln deye, as uncerteyn we alle
Ben of that day that deth schal on us falle.
'Acceptith thanne of us the trewe entent,
That never yit refusid youre hest,
And we wil, lord, if that ye wil assent,
Chese yow a wyf, in schort tyme atte lest,
Born of the gentilest and the heighest
Of al this lond, so that it oughte seme
Honour to God and yow, as we can deme.
'Deliver us out of al this busy drede
And tak a wyf, for hihe Goddes sake.
For if it so bifel, as God forbede,

[1] Harl. MS., *to asken.*

That thurgh your deth your lignage schuld aslake,
And that a straunge successour schuld take
Your heritage, O! wo were us on lyve!
Wherfor we pray yow hastily to wyve.'
Her meeke prayer and her pitous chere
Made the marquys to han pite.
'Ye wolde,' quod he, 'myn owne poeple deere,
To that I never erst thought constreigne me.
I me rejoysid of my liberte,
That selden tyme is founde in mariage;
Ther I was fre, I mot ben in servage.
'But natheles I se youre trewe[1] entent,
And trust upon your witt, and have doon ay;
Wherfor of my fre wil I wil assent
To wedde me, as soon as ever I may.
But ther as ye have profred me to day
To chese me a wyf, I wol relese
That choys, and pray yow of that profre cesse.
'For God it woot, that childer ofte been
Unlik her worthy eldris hem bifore;
Bounte cometh al of God, nought of the streen[2]
Of which thay ben engendrid and i-bore.
I trust in Goddes bounte, and therfore
My mariage, and myn estat and rest,
I him bytake, he may doon as him lest.
'Let me aloon in chesyng of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wil endure.
But I yow pray, and charge upon your lyf,
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worschip whil that hir lif may endure,
In word and werk, bothe heer and every where,
As sche an emperoures doughter were.
'And forthermor thus schul ye swer, that ye
Ageins my chois schuln never grucche ne stryve.

[1] Harl. MS., *se of you the trewe.*

[2] Virtue comes from God, and not from the *streen*, or strain (race) from which men are descended.

For sins I schal forgo my liberte
At your request, as ever mot I thrive,
Ther as myn hert is set, ther wil I wyve.
And but ye wil assent in such manere,
I pray yow spek no more of this matiere.'
With hertly wil thay sworen and assentyn
To al this thing, ther sayde no wight nay,
Bysechyng him of grace, er that thay wentyn,
That he wold graunten hem a certeyn day
Of his spousail, as soone as ever he may;
For yit alway the peple som what dredde
Lest that the marquys wolde no wyf wedde.
He graunted hem a day, such as him lest,
On which he wolde be weddid sicurly;
And sayd he dede al this at her requeste.
And thay with humble hert ful buxomly,
Knelyng upon her knees ful reverently,
Him thanken alle, and thus thay have an ende
Of her entent, and hom agein they wende.
And herupon he to his officeris
Comaundith for the feste to purveye,
And to his prive knightes and squyeres
Such charge gaf as him list on hem leye:
And thay to his comaundement obeye,
And ech of hem doth his diligence
To doon unto the feste reverence.

PARS SECUNDA.

NOUGHT fer fro thilke palys honurable,
Wher as this marquys schop his mariage,
Ther stood a throp, of sighte delitable,
In which that pore folk of that vilage
Hadden her bestes and her herburgage,
And after ner labour took her sustienaunce,
After the erthe gaf hem abundaunce.
Among this pore folk there duelt a man,
Which that was holden porest of hem alle;

But heighe God som tyme sende can
His grace unto a litel oxe stalle.
Janicula men of that throop him calle.
A doughter had he, fair y-nough to sight,
And Grisildes this yonge mayden[1] hight.
But for to speke of hir vertuous beaute,
Thaṅ was sche oon the fayrest under sonne;
For porely i-fostered up was sche,
No licorous lust was in hir body ronne;
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
Sche dronk, and for sche wolde vertu please,
Sche knew wel labour, but noon ydel ease.
But though this mayden tender were of age,
Yet in the brest of her virginite
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corrage;[2]
And in gret reverence and charite
Hir olde pore fader fostered sche;
A fewe scheep spynnyng on the feld sche kept,
Sche nolde[3] not ben ydel til sche slept.
And whan sche com hom sche wolde brynge
Wortis and other herbis tymes ofte,
The which sche schred and seth for her lyvyng,[4]
And made hir bed ful hard, and no thing softe.
And ay sche kept hir fadres lif on lofte,[5]
With every obeissance and diligence,
That child may do to fadres reverence.
Upon Grisildes, the pore creature,
Ful ofte sithes this marquys set his ye,
As he on huntyng rood peraventure.
And whan it fel he mighte hir espye,
He not with wantoun lokyng of folye

---

[1] Harl. MS., *daughter*.

[2] A mature and serious disposition.

[3] *Nolde* is here substituted for *nold*, the reading of the Harl. MS., as being more correct grammatically, and supplying a syllable required by the metre. Thus in the next line *wolde* occurs in the very same construction.

[4] Which she sliced and boiled, or seethed for her food.

[5] She kept her father's life from sinking, that is, supported him.

His eyghen cast upon hir, but in sad wyse
Upon hir cheer he wold him oft avise,
Comendyng in his hert hir wommanhede,
And eek hir vertu, passyng other[1] wight
Of so yong age, as wel in cheer as dede.
For though the poeple have no gret insight
In vertu, he considereth aright
Hir bounté, and desposed that he wolde
Wedde hir oonly, if ever he wedde scholde.
The day of weddyng cam, but no wight can
Telle what womman it schulde be;
For which mervayle wondrith many a man,
And sayden, whan they were in privite,
'Wol nought our lord yit leve his vanite?
Wol he not wedde? allas, allas the while!
Why wol he thus himself and us bigyle?'
But natheles this marquys hath doon make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,[2]
Broches and rynges, for Grisildes sake,
And of hir clothing took he the mesure,
By a mayde y-lik to hir of stature,
And eek of other ornamentes alle
That unto such a weddyng schulde falle.
The tyme of undern[3] of the same day
Approchith, that this weddyng schulde be,
And al the palys put was in array,

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *any other wight*; but *any*, which seems redundant, and spoils the metre, has been omitted.

[2] Azure, or blue, was the colour of truth.

[3] The glossary explains this to mean *the third hour of the day*, or *nine o'clock*. In a subsequent line [see p. 153] where this word occurs again, the original has *horâ tertiâ*, and, in this place, *horâ prandii*; whence it may be inferred that in Chaucer's time *nine o'clock*, or *underne*, was the usual hour of *prandium* or *dinner*.—See TYRWHITT. The *prandium* of that period, however, must not be confounded with the modern dinner. It took place at nine o'clock, hence called *horâ prandii*. There was another meal at noon, or soon after; and a supper (see *Squyeres Tale*) before going to bed. The two forms of grace in the Breviary are for *ante prandium* and *ante cœnam*. In *The Schipmannes Tale* it appears that the family heard mass, and then went to dinner; and as nobody

Bothe halle and chambur, y-lik here degre,[1]
Houses of office stuffid with plente;
Ther maystow se of deyntevous vitayle,
That may be founde, as fer as lastith Itaile.
This real marquys, really arrayd,
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,
The which unto the feste were prayed,
And of his retenu the bachelerie.[2]
With many a soun of sondry melodye,
Unto the vilage, of which I tolde,
In this array the right way hap ,they holde.
Grysild of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hir schapen was al this array,
To fecche water at a welle is went,
And cometh hom as soone as sche may,
For wel sche had herd say, that ilke day
The marquys schulde wedde, and, if sche might,
Sche wold have seyen somwhat of that sight.
Sche sayd, 'I wol with other maydenes stonde,
That ben my felawes, in oure dore, and see
The marquysesse,[3] and therfore wol I fonde
To don at hom, as soone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And thanne may I at leysir hir byholde,
And sche the way into the castel holde.'
And as sche wold over the threisshfold goon,
The marquys cam and gan hir for to calle.
And sche set doun her water-pot anoon
Bisides the threischfold of this oxe stalle,[4]
And doun upon hir knees sche gan falle,

---

could communicate after eating, the *prandium* was, therefore, the first meal. In some cases, there might have been a slight *collation* earlier; as is still the custom abroad, where a cup of coffee is sometimes taken an hour or two before the *déjeûner à la fourchette*, which answers to the *prandium*, and is the first regular meal.

[1] Other MSS. read *eche in his degre*.

[2] The knights or bachelors. [3] Marchioness.

[4] In Italy, and other continental countries, the peasantry to this day live in the same houses with their cattle.

And with sad countenaunce she knelith stille,
Til sche had herd what was the lordes wille.
This thoughtful marquys spak unto this mayde
Ful soberly, and sayd in this manere:
'Wher is your fader, Grisildes?' he sayde.
And sche with reverence in humble cheere
Answerd, 'Lord, he is al redy heere.'
And in sche goth withouten lenger let,
And to the marquys sche hir fader fet.
He by the hond than takith this olde man,
And sayde thus, whan he him had on syde:
'Janicula, I neither may ne can
Lenger the plesauns of myn herte hyde;
If that ye vouchesauf, what so betyde,
Thy doughter wil I take er that I wende
As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.
'Thow lovest me, I wot it wel certeyn,
And art my faithful leige-man[1] i-bore,
And al that likith me, I dar wel sayn,
It likith the, and specially therfore
Tel me that poynt, as ye have herd bifore,
If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe.'
The sodeyn caas the man astoneyd tho,
That reed he wax, abaischt, and al quakyng
He stood, unnethe sayd he wordes mo,
But oonly this: 'Lord,' quod he, 'my willyng
Is as ye wol, agenst youre likyng
I wol no thing, ye be my lord so deere;
Right as yow list, governith this matiere.'
'Yit wol I,' quod this markys softely,
'That in thy chambre, I and thou and sche
Have a collacioun, and wostow why?
For I wol aske if it hir wille be
To be my wyf, and reule hir after me;
And al this schal be doon in thy presence,
I wol nought speke out of thyn audience.'

[1] See *ante*, p. 122, note 1.

And in the chamber, whil thay were aboute
The tretys, which as ye schul after hiere,
The poeple cam unto the hous withoute,
And wondrid hem, in how honest manere
And tendurly sche kept hir fader deere;
But outerly Grisildes wonder might,
For never erst ne saugh sche such a sight.
No wonder is though that sche were astoned,
To seen so gret a gest come into that place;
Sche never was to suche gestes woned,
For which sche loked with ful pale face.
But schortly this matiere forth to chace,
These arn the wordes that the marquys sayde
To this benigne, verray, faithful mayde.
'Grisyld,' he sayde, 'ye schul wel understonde,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
As I suppose ye wil that it so be;
But these demaundes aske I first,' quod he,
'That sith it schal be doon in hasty wyse;
Wol ye assent, or elles yow avyse?
'I say this, be ye redy with good hert
To al my lust, and that I frely may
As me best liste do yow laughe or smert,
And never ye to gruch it, night ne day;
And eek whan I say ye, ye say not nay,
Neyther by word, ne frownyng contenaunce?
Swer this, and here swer I oure alliaunce.'
Wondryng upon this word, quakyng for drede,
Sche sayde: 'Lord, undigne and unworthy
I am, to thilk honour that ye me bede;
But as ye wil your self, right so wol I;
And here I swere, that never wityngly
In werk, ne thought, I nyl yow disobeye
For to the deed,[1] though me were loth to deye.'

[1] This is still the construction in the vulgar language of East Anglia, where it is common to say 'I am frozen to deed,' meaning to death.

'This is y-nough, Grisilde myn,' quod he.
And forth goth he with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after that cam sche,
And to the pepul he sayd in this manere:
'This is my wyf,' quod he, 'that stondith heere.
Honoureth hir, and loveth hir, I yow pray,
Who so me loveth; ther is no more to say.'
And for that no thing of hir olde gere
Sche schulde brynge unto his hous, he bad
That wommen schuld despoilen hir right there,
Of which these ladyes were nought ful glad
To handle hir clothes wherein sche was clad;
But natheles this mayde bright of hew
Fro foot to heed they schredde han al newe.
Hir heeres han thay kempt, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hir fyngres smale
A coroun on hir heed thay han i-dressed,
And set hir ful of nowches gret and smale.
Of hir array what schuld I make a tale?
Unnethe the poeple hir knew for hir fairnesse,
Whan sche translated was in such richesse.
This marquis hath hir spoused with a ryng
Brought for the same cause, and than hir sette
Upon an hors snow-whyt, and wel amblyng,
And to his palys, er he lenger lette,
(With joyful poeple, that hir ladde and mette)[1]
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.
And schortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe marquisesse
God hath such favour sent hir of his grace,
That it ne semyd not by liklynesse
That sche was born and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxe stalle,
But norischt in an emperoures halle.

---

[1] Accompanied and met her.

To every wight sche waxen is so deere,
And worschipful, that folk ther sche was born,
And from hir burthe knew hir yer by yere,
Unnethe trowed thay, but dorst han sworn,
That to Janicle, of which I spak biforn
Sche doughter were, for as by conjecture
Hem thought sche was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was sche,
Sche was encresed in such excellence
Of thewes goode, i-set in high bounte,
And so discret, and fair of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
And couthe so the poeples hert embrace,
That ech hir loveth that lokith in hir face.

Nought oonly of Saluce in the toun
Publissched was the bounte of hir name,
But eek byside in many a regioun,
If oon sayd wel, another sayd the same.
So sprad of hire heigh bounte the fame,
That men and wommen, as wel yong as olde,
Gon to Saluce upon hir to byholde.

Thus Walter louly, nay but really,[1]
Weddid with fortunat honestete,
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
At home, and outward grace y-nough hath he;
And for he saugh that under low degre
Was ofte vertu y-hid, the poeple him helde
A prudent man, and that is seen ful selde.

Nought oonly this Grisildes thurgh hir witte
Couthe al the feet of wifly homlynesse,[2]
But eek whan that the tyme required it,
The comun profyt couthe sche redresse;
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
In al that lond, that sche ne couthe appese,
And wisly bryng hem alle in rest and ese.

---

[1] This Walter wedded humbly, or (I should rather say) royally —*scil.*, because of his wife's virtue. [2] Harl. MS., *humblesse.*

Though that hir housbond absent were anoon,
If gentilmen, or other of hir contre,
Were wroth, sche wolde brynge hem at oon,
So wyse and rype wordes hadde sche,
And juggement of so gret equite,
That sche from heven sent was, as men wende,
Poeple to save, and every wrong to amende.
Nought longe tyme after that this Grisilde
Was wedded, sche a doughter hath i-bore;
Al had hir lever han had a knave[1] childe,
Glad was this marquis and the folk therfore,
For though a mayden child come al byfore,
Sche may unto a knave child atteigne
By liklihed, sith sche nys not bareigne.

INCIPIT TERTIA PARS.

THER fel, as fallith many times mo,
Whan that this child hath souked but a throwe,
This marquys in his herte longith so
Tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse[2] for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This mervaylous desir his wyf tassaye;
Nedeles, God wot,[3] he thought hir to affraye.
He had assayed hir y-nough bifore,
And fond hir ever good, what needith it
Hire to tempte, and alway more and more?
Though som men prayse it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I say that evel it sit
Tassay a wyf whan that it is no neede,
And putte hir in anguysch and in dreede.
For which this marquis wrought in this manere;
He com aloone a-night ther as sche lay
With sterne face, and with ful trouble cheere,

[1] *Knave* meant—1, a boy (German, *knabe*); 2, a servant, like *garçon*; 3, from the peculiar propensities of the latter class, a rogue.
[2] To know her sincerity. [3] Harl. MS., *now God wot.*

And sayde thus, 'Grisild,' quod he, 'that day
That I yow took out of your pore array,
And putte yow in estat of heigh noblesse,
Ye[1] have not that forgeten, as I gesse.
'I say, Grisild, this present dignite
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
Makith yow not forgetful for to be
That I yow took in pore estat ful lowe,
For eny wele ye moot your selve knowe.[2]
Tak heed of every word that I yow say,
Ther is no wight that herith it but we tway.
'Ye wot your self how that ye comen heere
Into this hous, it is nought long ago;
And though to me that ye be leef and deere,
Unto my gentils ye be no thing so.
Thay seyn, to hem it is gret schame and wo
For to ben subject and ben in servage
To the, that born art of a smal village.
'And namely syn thy doughter was i-bore,
These wordes han thay spoken douteles.
But I desire, as I have doon byfore,
To lyve my lif with hem in rest and pees;
I may not in this caas be reccheles;
I moot do with thy doughter for the best,
Not as I wolde, but as my pepul lest.
'And yit, God wot, this is ful loth to me.
But natheles withoute youre witynge
Wol I not doon; but this wol I,' quod he,
'That ye to me assent as in this thing.
Schew now your paciens in your wirching,
That thou me hightest and swor in yon village,
That day that maked was oure mariage.'
Whan sche had herd al this sche nought ameevyd
Neyther in word, in cheer, or countenaunce,

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *yet*, which makes nonsense. *Ye* is adopted from Tyrwhitt.

[2] You were in a full low state for any goods that you possessed in your own right.

(For, as it semed, sche was nought agreeved);
She sayde, 'Lord, al lith in your plesaunce;
My child and I, with hertly obeisaunce,
Ben youres al, and ye may save or spille
Your oughne thing; werkith after your wille.
'Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,
Liken to yow, that may displesen me;
Ne I desire no thing for to have,
Ne drede for to lese, save oonly ye.
This wil is myn hert, and ay schal be,
No length of tyme or deth may this deface,
Ne chaunge my corrage to other place.'
Glad was this marquis for hir answeryng,
But yit he feyned as he were not so.
Al dreery was his cheer and his lokyng,
Whan that he schold out of the chambre go.
Soon after this, a forlong way or tuo,
He prively hath told al his entent
Unto a man, and unto his wyf him sent.
A maner sergeant was this prive man,
The which that faithful oft he founden hadde
In thinges grete, and eek such folk wel can
Don execucioun in thinges badde;
The lord knew wel that he him loved and dradde.
And whan this sergeant wist his lordes wille,
Into the chamber he stalked him ful stille.
'Madame,' he sayd, 'ye most forgive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constreynit;
Ye ben so wys, that ful wel knowe ye,
That lordes hestes mow not ben i-feynit.
They mowe wel be biwaylit or compleynit;
But men moot neede unto her lust obeye,
And so wol I, there is no more to seye.
'This child I am comaundid for to take.'
And spak no more, but out the child he hent
Dispitously, and gan a chiere make,
As though he wold han slayn it, er he went.
Grisild moot al suffer and al consent;

And as a lamb sche sitteth meeke and stille,
And let this cruel sergeant doon his wille.
Suspecious was the defame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas! hir doughter, that she loved so,
Sche wend he wold han slayen it right tho;
But natheles sche neyther weep ne siked,
Conformyng hir to that the marquis liked.
But atte last speke sche bigan,
And mekely sche to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentilman,
That she most kisse hir child, er that it deyde.
And on hir arm[1] this litel child sche leyde,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blesse,[2]
And lullyd it, and after gan it kesse.
And thus sche sayd in hir benigne vois:
'Farwel, my child, I schal the never see;
But sith I the have marked withe the croys,
Of thilke fader blessed mot thou be,
That for us deyde upon a cros of tre;
Thy soule, litel child, I him bytake,
For this night schaltow deyen for my sake.'
I trowe that to a norice in this caas
It had ben hard this rewthe for to see;
Wel might a moder than have cryed allas,
But natheles so sad stedefast was sche,
That she endured al adversite,
And to the sergeant mekely sche sayde,
'Have her agayn your litel yonge mayde.
'Goth now,' quod sche, 'and doth my lordes heste.
But o thing wil I pray yow of your grace,
That but my lord forbede yow atte leste,
Burieth this litel body in som place,
That bestes ne no briddes it to-race.'

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[1] Other MSS. read *barme*, the lap.

[2] Made the sign of the cross on it.—See *ante*, p. 21, note 2.

But he no word wil to the purpos say,
But took the child and went upon his way.
This sergeant com unto this lord agayn,
And of Grisildes wordes and hir cheere
He tolde poynt for poynt, in schort and playn,
And him presentith with his doughter deere.
Somwhat this lord hath rewthe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos huld he stille,
As lordes doon, whan thay woln have her wille;
And bad the sergeaunt that he prively
Scholde this childe softe wynde and wrappe,
With alle circumstaunces tendurly,
And carry it in a cofre, or in his lappe;
Upon peyne his heed of for to swappe
That no man schulde knowe of this entent,
Ne whens he com, ne whider that he went;
But at Boloygne, to his suster deere,
That thilke tyme of Panik[1] was countesse,
He schuld it take, and schewe hir this matiere,
Byseching her to doon hir busynesse
This child to fostre in all gentilesse,
And whos child that it was he bad hir hyde
From every wight, for ought that mighte bytyde.
The sergeant goth, and hath fulfild this thing.
But to this marquys now retourne we;
For now goth he ful fast ymaginyng,
If by his wyves cher he mighte se,
Or by hir word apparceyve, that sche
Were chaunged, but he hir never couthe fynde,
But ever in oon y-like sad and kynde.
As glad, as humble, as busy in servise
And eek in love, as sche was wont to be,
Was sche to him, in every maner wyse;
Ne of hir doughter nought o word spak sche;
Non accident for noon adversite

[1] Tyrwhitt changed the word to *Pavie*, not adverting to the original, where it is said that the Marquis's sister was married to the Count of *Panico*.

Was seyn in hir, he never hir doughter name
Ne nempnyd sche, in ernest ne in game.

INCIPIT QUARTA PARS.

IN this estaat ther passed ben foure yer
Er sche with childe was, but, as God wolde,
A knave child sche bar by this Waltier,
Ful gracious, and fair for to biholde;
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nought oonly he, but al his contre, merye
Was for this child, and God thay thank and herie.
Whan it was tuo yer old, and fro the brest
Departed fro his noris, upon a day
This markys caughte yit another lest
To tempt his wif yit after, if he may.
O! needles was sche tempted in assay;
But weddid men ne knowen no mesure,
Whan that thay fynde a pacient creature.
'Wyf,' quod this marquys, 'ye han herd er this
My peple sekly berith oure mariage,
And namly syn my sone y-boren is,
Now is it wors than ever in al our age;
The murmur sleth myn hert and my corrage,
For to myn eeris cometh the vois so smerte,
That it wel neigh destroyed hath myn herte.
'Now say thay thus, Whan Wauter is agoon,
Than schal the blood of Janicle succede,
And ben our lord, for other have we noon.
Suche wordes saith my poeple, out of drede.[1]
Wel ought I of such murmur taken heede,
For certeynly I drede such sentence,
Though thay not pleynly speke in my audience
'I wolde lyve in pees, if that I might;
Wherfor I am disposid outrely,
As I his suster servede by night,

[1] You may be sure.—See *ante*, p. 35, note 4.

Right so thynk I to serve him prively.
This warn I you, that ye not sodeinly
Out of your self for no thing schuld outraye:
Beth pacient, and therof I yow pray.'
'I have,' quod sche, 'sayd thus and ever schal,
I wol no thing, ne nil no thing certayn,
But as yow list; nought greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn
At your comaundement; this is to sayne,
I have not had no part of children twayne,
But first syknes, and after wo and payne.
'Ye ben oure lord, doth with your owne thing
Right as yow list, axith no red of me;
For as I left at hom al my clothing,
Whan I first com to yow, right so,' quod sche,
Left I my wille and my liberte,
And took your clothing; wherfor I yow preye,
Doth youre plesaunce, I wil youre lust obeye.
'And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your wil to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,
I wold it doon withoute negligence.
But now I wot your lust, and what ye wolde,
Al your plesaunce ferm and stable I holde,
For wist I that my deth wold doon yow ease,
Right gladly wold I deye, yow to please.
'Deth may make no comparisoun
Unto your love.' And whan this marquys say
The constance of his wyf, he cast adoun
His eyghen two, and wondrith that sche may
In pacience suffre as this array;
And forth he goth with drery countenaunce,
But to his hert it was ful gret plesaunce.
This ugly sergeaunt in the same wise
That he hir doughter fette, right so he,
Or worse, if men worse can devyse,
Hath hent hir sone, that ful was of beaute.
And ever in oon so pacient was sche,

That sche no cheere made of hevynesse,
But kist hir sone, and after gan him blesse.
Save this sche prayed him, if that he mighte,
Her litel sone he wold in eorthe grave,
His tendre lymes, delicate to siglit,
From foules and from bestes him to save.
But sche noon answer of him mighte have.
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloyne he tenderly it brought.
This marquis wondreth ever the lenger the more
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbifore,
That parfytly hir children loved sche,
He wold have wend that of some subtilte
And of malice, or of cruel corrage,
That sche had suffred this with sad visage.
But wel he knew, that, next himself, certayn
Sche loved hir children best in every wise.
But now of wommen wold I aske fayn,
If these assayes mighten not suffice?
What couthe a stourdy housebonde more devyse
To prove hir wyfhode and her stedefastnesse,
And he contynuyng ever in stourdynesse?
But ther ben folk of such condicioun,
That, whan they have a certeyn purpos take,
Thay can nought stynt of her entencioun,
But, right as thay were bounden to a stake,
Thay wil not of her firste purpos slake;
Right so this marquys fullich hath purposed
To tempt his wyf, as he was first disposed.
He wayteth, if by word or countenaunce
That sche to him was chaunged of corage.
But never couthe he fynde variaunce,
Sche was ay oon in hert and in visage;
And ay the ferther that sche was in age,
The more trewe, if that were possible,
Sche was to him, and more penyble.

For which it semyd this, that of hem tuo
Ther nas but oo wil; for as Walter lest,
The same plesaunce was hir lust also;
And, God be thanked, al fel for the best.
Sche schewed wel, for no worldly unrest
A wyf, as of hir self, no thing ne scholde
Wylne in effect, but as hir housbond wolde.
The sclaunder of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
That of a cruel hert he wikkedly,
For he a pore womman weddid hadde,
Hath morthrid bothe his children prively;
Such murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is; for to the peples eere
Ther com no word, but that thay mortherid were.
For which, wher as his peple therbyfore
Had loved him wel, the sclaunder of his diffame
Made hem that thay him hatede therfore;
To ben a mordrer is an hateful name.
But natheles, for ernest or for game,
He of his cruel purpos nolde stente,
To tempt his wyf was set al his entente.
Whan that his doughter twelf yer was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in suche wise
Enformed of his wille, sent his message,
Comaundyng hem, such bulles to devyse,
As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
How that the pope, as for his peples reste,
Bad him to wedde another, if him leste.
I say, he bad, thay schulde countrefete
The popes bulles, makyng mencioun
That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete,
As by the popes dispensacioun,
To stynte rancour and discencioun
Bitwix his peple and him; thus sayd the bulle,
The which thay han publisshid atte fulle.
The rude poepel, as it no wonder is,
Wende ful wel that it had be right so.
But whan these tydynges come to Grisildis,

I deeme that hir herte was ful wo;
But sche y-like sad for evermo
Disposid was, this humble creature,
Thadversite of fortun al tendure;
  Abydyng ever his lust and his plesaunce,
To whom that sche was give, hert and al,
As to hir verray worldly suffisaunce.
But schortly if I this story telle schal,
This marquys writen hath in special
A letter, in which he schewith his entent,
And secrely he to Boloyne it sent.
  To therl of Panyk, which that hadde tho
Weddid his suster, prayd he specially
To brynge hom agein his children tuo
In honurable estaat al openly.
But oon thing he him prayde outerly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquere.
Schuld not tellen whos children thay were,
  But say the mayde schuld i-weddid be
Unto the markys of Saluce anoon.
And as this eorl was prayd, so dede he,
For at day set he on his way is goon
Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon
In riche array, this mayden for to guyde,
Her yonge brother rydyng by hir syde.
  Arrayed was toward hir mariage
This freisshe may al ful of gemmes clere;
Hir brother, which that seven yer was of age,
Arrayed eek ful freissh in his manere;
And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
Toward Saluces schapyng her journay,
Fro day to day thay ryden in her way.

INCIPIT PARS QUINTA.

AMONG al this, after his wikked usage,
  This marquis yit his wif to tempte more
To the uttrest proef of hir corrage,

Fully to han experiens and lore,
If that sche were as stedefast as byfore,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boystrously hath sayd hir this sentence.
'Certes, Grisildes, I had y-nough plesaunce
To have yow to my wif, for your goodnesse,
And for youre trouthe, and for your obeissaunce,
Nought for your lignage, ne for your richesse;
But now know I in verray sothfastnesse,
That in gret lordschip, if I wel avyse,
Ther is gret servitude[1] in sondry wyse;
I may not do, as every ploughman may;
My poeple me constreignith for to take
Another wyf, and cryen day by day;
And eek the pope,[2] rancour for to slake,
Consentith it, that dar I undertake;
And trewely, thus moche I wol yow say,
My newe wif is comyng by the way.
'Be strong of hert, and voyde anoon hir place,
And thilke dower that ye broughten me
Tak it agayn, I graunt it of my grace.
Retourneth to your fadres hous,' quod he,
'No man may alway have prosperite.
With even hert I rede yow endure
The strok of fortune or of adventure.'
And sche agayn answerd in patience:
'My lord,' quod sche, 'I wot, and wist alway,
How that betwixe your magnificence
And my poverte no wight can ne may
Make comparisoun, it is no nay;
I ne held me never digne in no manere
To ben your wyf, ne yit your chamberere.
'And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witnesse,

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[1] Harl. MS., *servise*.

[2] The Harl. MS. for *pope* reads *popes*; the meaning evidently is, the Pope, in order to slake or allay rancour, consents, &c.

And al so wisly he my soule glade)
I never huld me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servaunt to your worthinesse,
And ever schal, whil that my lyf may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.
'That ye so longe of your benignite
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,
Wher as I was not worthy for to be,
That thonk I God and yow, to whom I preye
For-yeld it yow, ther is no more to seye.
Unto my fader gladly wil I wende,
And with him duelle unto my lyves ende.
'Ther I was fostred as a child ful smal,
Til I be deed my lyf ther wil I lede,
A widow clene in body, hert, and al;
For sith I gaf to yow my maydenhede,
And am your trewe wyf, it is no drede,
God schilde such a lordes wyf to take
Another man to housbond or to make.
'And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte yow wele and prosperite;
For I wol gladly yelden hir my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For sith it liketh yow, my lord,' quod sche,
'That whilom were al myn hertes reste,
That I schal gon, I wil go whan yow leste.
'But ther as ye profre me such dowayre
As I ferst brought, it is wel in my mynde,
It were my wrecchid clothes, no thing faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semed by your speche and your visage,
That day that maked was our mariage!
'But soth is sayd, algate I fynd it trewe,
For in effect it proved is on me,
Love is nought old as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for noon adversite
To deyen in the caas, it schal not be

That ever in word or werk I schal repente
That I yow gaf myn hert in hol entente.
'My lord, ye wot that in my fadres place
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,
And richely me cladden of your grace;
To yow brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakednesse,[1] and maydenhede;
And her agayn my clothyng I restore,
And eek my weddyng ryng for evermore.
'The remenant of your jewels redy be
Within your chambur dar I saufly sayn.[2]
Naked out of my fadres hous,' quod sche,
'I com, and naked moot I torne agayn.
Al your pleisauns wold I fulfille fayn;
But yit I hope it be not youre entent,
That I smocles out of your paleys went.
'Ye couthe not doon so dishonest a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children leye,
Schulde byforn the poeple, in my walkyng,
Be seye al bare: wherfore I yow pray
Let me not lik a worm go by the way;
Remembre yow, myn oughne lord so deere,
I was your wyf, though I unworthy were.
'Wherfor, in guerdoun of my maydenhede,
Which that I brought and nought agayn I bere,
As vouchethsauf to geve me to my meede
But such a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here
That was your wif; and here take I my leve
Of yow, myn oughne lord, lest I yow greve.'
'The smok,' quod he, 'that thou hast on thy bak,
Let it be stille, and ber it forth with the.'
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,

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[1] Harl. MS., *mekeness*. Petrarch's words are—'Neque omnino alia mihi dos fuit quam fides et *nuditas*.'

[2] The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, reads—
'*Within your chamber dore dar*,' &c.

But went his way for routhe and for pite.
Byforn the folk hirselven strippith sche,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader house forth is sche fare.
The folk hir folwen wepyng in hir weye,
And fortune ay thay cursen as thay goon;
But sche fro wepyng kept hir eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak sche noon.
Hir fader, that this tyding herd anoon,
Cursed the day and tyme, that nature
Schoop him to ben a lyves creature.
For oute of doute this olde pore man
Was ever in suspect of hir mariage;
For ever he deemed, sith that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corrage,
Him wolde think that it were disparage
To his estate, so lowe for to light,
And voyden hire as sone as ever he might.
Agayns his doughter hastily goth he;
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng;
And with hir olde cote, as it might be,
He covered hir ful sorwfully wepynge;
But on hir body might he it nought bringe,
For rude was the cloth, and mor of age
By dayes fele[1] than at hir mariage.
Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space
Dwellith this flour of wifly pacience,
That neyther by her wordes ne by hir face,
Byforn the folk, nor eek in her absence,
Ne schewed sche that hir was doon offence,
Ne of hir highe astaat no remembraunce
Ne hadde sche, as by hir countenaunce.
No wonder is, for in hir gret estate
Hir gost was ever in playn humilite;
Ne tender mouth, noon herte delicate,

---

[1] *Fele* is the Anglo-Saxon for many; modern German, *viel*, pronounced *fiel*.

Ne pompe, ne semblant of realte;
But ful of pacient benignite,
Discrete, and prideles, ay honurable,
And to hir housbond ever meke and stable.
Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem lust, can wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse,
Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,
Ther can no man in humblesse him acquyte
As wommen can, ne can be half so trewe
As wommen ben, but it be falle of newe.

PARS SEXTA.[1]

FRO Boloyne is this erl of Panik y-come,
Of which the fame up-sprong to more and lasse,
And to the poeples eeres alle and some
Was couth eek, that a newe marquisesse
He with him brought, in such pomp and richesse,
That never was ther seyn with mannes ye
So noble array in al West Lombardye.
The marquys, which that schoop and knew al this,
Er that this erl was come, sent his message
For thilke[2] cely pore Grisildis;
And sche with humble hert and glad[3] visage,
Not with no swollen hert in hir corrage,
Cam at his hest, and on hir knees hir sette,
And reverently and wyfly sche him grette.
'Grisild,' quod he, 'my wil is outrely,
This mayden, that schal weddid be to me,
Receyved be to morwe as really
As it possible is in myn hous to be;
And eek that every wight in his degre

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[1] Harl. MS. has no division here.

[2] The final *e* has been added to *thilk*, as more correct, grammatically, and necessary for the metre.

[3] Harl. MS., *good*.

Have his estaat in sittyng and servyse,
In high plesaunce, as I can devyse.
'I have no womman suffisant certeyne
The chambres for tarray in ordinance
After my lust, and therfor wold I feyne,
That thin were al such maner governaunce;
Thow knowest eek of al my plesaunce;
Though thyn array be badde, and ille byseye,
Do thou thy dever atte leste weye.'
'Nought oonly, lord, that I am glad,' quod sche,
'To don your lust, but I desire also'
Yow for to serve and plese in my degre,
Withoute feyntyng,[1] and schal evermo;
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne schal the gost withinne myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entent.'
And with that word sche gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peyned hir to doon al that sche might,
Preying the chamberers for Goddes sake
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and schake,
And sche the moste servisable of alle
Hath every chamber arrayed, and his halle.
Abouten undern gan this lord[2] alight,
That with him brought these noble children tweye;
For which the peple ran to se that sight
Of her array, so richely biseye.
And than at erst amonges hem thay seye,
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest
To chaunge his wyf; for it was for the best.
For sche is fairer, as thay demen alle,
Than is Grisild, and more tender of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwen hem schulde falle,
And more plesaunt for hir high lynage,
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage,

[1] Harl. MS. reads *feynyng*, evidently by mistake; Petrarch's words are 'Neque in hoc unquam *fatigabor*.'

[2] Mr. Wright substitutes *erl*, as a more exact translation of Petrarch's word, *comes*.

That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,
Comending now the marquis governaunce.
O stormy poeple, unsad and ever untrewe,
And undiscret, and chaunging as a fane,
Delytyng[1] ever in rombel that is newe,
For lik the moone ay wax ye and wane;
Ay ful of clappyng, dere y-nough a jane,[2]
Youre doom is fals, your constaunce yvel previth,
A ful gret fool is he that on yow leevith.
Thus sayde saad folke in that citee,
Whan that the poeple gased up and doun;
For thay were glad right for the novelte,
To have a newe lady of her toun.
No more of this now make I mencioun,
But to Grisildes agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance, and her busynesse.
Ful busy was Grisild in every thing,
That to the feste was appertinent;
Right nought was sche abaissht of hir clothing,
Though it were ruyde, and som del eek to-rent,
But with glad cheer to the gate is sche went,
With other folk, to griete the marquisesse,
And after that doth forth her busynesse.
With so glad chier his gestes sche receyveth,
And so connyngly everich is his degre,
That no defaute no man aperceyveth,
But ay thay wondren what sche might be,
That in so pover array was for to se,
And couthe such honour and reverence,
And worthily thay prayse hir prudence.
In all this mene while sche ne stent
This mayde and eek hir brother to comende
With al hir hert in ful buxom[3] entent,

[1] Harl. MS., *desynyng*.

[2] *Jane* is a small coin of Genoa (Janua). The meaning is, Your praise is dear enough at a farthing.

[3] *Buxom*. The reading of the Harl. MS. has been restored, Mr. Wright having changed it to *benigne*, without, apparently, sufficient reason, buxom meaning obedient.

So wel, that no man couthe hir pris amende;
But atte last whan that these lordes wende
To sitte doun to mete, he gan to calle
Grisild, as sche was busy in his halle.
'Grisyld,' quod he, as it were in his play,
'How likith the my wif and hir beaute?'
'Right wel, my lord,' quod sche, 'for in good fay,
A fairer saugh I never noon than sche.
I pray to God give hir prosperite;
And so hope I, that he wol to yow sende
Plesaunce y-nough unto your lyves ende.
'On thing warn I yow and biseke also,
That ye ne prike with no tormentynge
This tendre mayden, as ye have do mo;[1]
For sche is fostrid in hir norischinge
More tendrely, and to my supposynge
Sche couthe not adversite endure,
As couthe a pore fostrid creature.'
And whan this Walter saugh hir pacience,
Hir glade cheer, and no malice at al,
And he so oft had doon to hir offence,
And sche ay sad and constant as a wal,
Continuyng ever hir innocence over al,
This sturdy marquys gan his herte dresse
To rewen upon hir wyfly stedefastnesse.
'This is y-nough, Grisilde myn,' quod he,
'Be now no more agast, ne yvel apayed.
I have thy faith and thy benignite,
As wel as ever womman was, assayed
In gret estate, and propreliche arrayed;
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedefastnesse;'
And hir in armes took, and gan hir kesse.
And sche for wonder took of it no keepe;
Sche herde not what thing he to hir sayde,
Sche ferd as sche had stert out of a sleepe,

[1] For *me*. Tyrwhitt says, This is one of the most licentious corruptions of orthography that I remember to have seen in Chaucer.

Til sche out of hir masidnesse abrayde.
'Grisild,' quod he, 'by God that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon other I have,
Ne never had, as God my soule save.
'This is my doughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Schal be myn heir, as I have ay purposed;
Thow bar hem in thy body trewely.
At Boloyne have I kept him prively;
Tak hem agayn, for now maistow not seye,
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.
'And folk, that other weyes han seyd of me,
I warn hem wel, that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no cruelte,
But for tassaye in the thy wommanhede;
And not to slen my children, (God forbede!)
But for to kepe hem prively and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wil.'
Whan sche this herd, aswoned doun sche fallith
For pitous joy, and after her swownyng
Sche bothe hir yonge children to hir callith,
And in hir armes pitously wepyng
Embraseth hem, and tenderly kissyng,
Ful lik a moder with hir salte teris
Sche bathis bothe hir visage and hir eeris.
O, such a pitous thing it was to see
Her swownyng, and hir humble vois to heere!
'*Graunt mercy*, lord, God thank it yow,' quod sche,
'That ye han saved me my children deere.'[1]
Now rek I never to be deed right heere,
Sith I stond in your love and in your grace,
No fors of deth, ne whan my spirit pace.
'O tender deere yonge children myne,
Youre woful moder wende stedefastly,
That cruel houndes or som foul vermyne

[1] Harl. MS.—
'*That ye han kept my children so deere.*'

Had eten yow; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tenderly
Hath doon yow kepe.' And in that same stounde
Al sodeinly sche swapped doun to grounde.
And in hir swough so sadly holdith sche
Hir children tuo, whan sche gan hem tembrace,
That with gret sleight and gret difficulte
The children from her arm they gonne arace.
O! many a teer on many a pitous face
Doun ran of hem that stooden hir bisyde,
Unnethe aboute hir mighte thay abyde.
Waltier hir gladith, and hir sorwe slakith,
Sche rysith up abaisshed from hir traunce,
And every wight hir joy and feste makith,
Til sche hath caught agayn her continaunce.
Wauter hir doth so faithfully plesaunce,
That it was daynte to see the cheere
Bitwix hem tuo, now thay be met in feere.
These ladys, whan that thay her tyme say,
Han taken hir, and into chambre goon,
And strippe hir out of hir rude array,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte schon,
With a coroun of many a riche stoon
Upon hir heed, thay into halle hir brought;
And ther sche was honoured as hir ought.
Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende;
For every man and womman doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to despende,
Til on the welken schon the sterres bright;
For more solempne in every mannes sight
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hir mariage.
Ful many a yer in heigh prosperite
Lyven these tuo in concord and in rest,
And richeliche his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest
Of al Ytaile, and thanne in pees and rest

His wyves fader in his court he kepith,
Til that the soule out of his body crepith.
His sone succedith in his heritage,
In rest and pees, after his fader day;
And fortunat was eek in mariage,
Al put he not his wyf in gret assay.
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde tymes yore,
And herknith, what this auctor saith therfore.
This story is sayd, not for that wyves scholde
Folwe Grisild, as in humilite,
For it were importable, though thay wolde;
But for that every wight in his degre
Schulde be constant in adversite.
As was Grisild, therfore Petrark writeth
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.
For sith[1] a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel more us oughte
Receyven al in gre that God us sent.
For gret skil is he prove that he wroughte,
But he ne temptith no man that he boughte,[2]
As saith seint Jame, if ye his pistil rede;
He provith folk al day, it is no drede;
And suffrith us, as for our exercise,
With scharpe scourges of adversite
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
Nought for to knowe oure wille, for certes he,
Er we were born, knew al our frelte;
And for oure best is al his governaunce;
Let us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.
But oo word, lordes, herkneth er I go:
It were ful hard to fynde now a dayes
As Grisildes in al a toun thre or tuo;
For if that thay were put so such assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes

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[1] Harl. MS., *swich*. The reading in the text is that of the Lansd. MS.
[2] James i. 13.

With bras, that though the coyn be fair at ye,
It wolde rather brest in tuo than plye.
For which heer, for the wyves love of Bathe,—
Whos lyf and alle of hir secte God meyntene
In high maistry, and elles were it scathe,—
I wil with lusty herte freisch and grene,
Say yow a song to glade yow, I wene;
And lat us stynt of ernestful matiere.
Herknith my song, that saith in this manere.

L'ENVOYE DE CHAUCER.[1]

GRISILD is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe at oones buried in Itayle;
For whiche I crye in open audience,
No weddid man so hardy be to assayle
His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde
Grisildes, for in certeyn he schal fayle.
O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
Let noon humilite your tonges nayle;
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of yow a story of such mervayle,
As of Grisildes pacient and kynde,
Lest Chichivache[2] yow swolwe in hir entraile.
Folwith ecco, that holdith no silence,
But ever answereth at the countretayle;

---

[1] In the *Envoye*, Chaucer seems to indemnify himself for his patient adoption of Petrarch in the foregoing tale, by giving the reins to his characteristic wit and irony.

[2] The allusion is to the subject of an old ballad, still preserved in the MS. Harl., 2251, fol. 270, b. It is a kind of Pageant, in which two beasts are introduced, called *Bycorne* and *Chichevache*. The former is supposed to feed upon obedient husbands, and the latter upon patient wives; and the humour of the piece consists in representing Bycorne as pampered with a superfluity of food, and Chichevache as half-starved. The name Chichevache is French, *vacca parca*.—T.

Tyrwhitt is in error in calling the ballad a Pageant. It is a set of verses intended to be inscribed on a tapestry representing the two beasts. There is a broadside woodcut of them in the Society of Antiquaries' Library. For a poem by Lydgate on this subject, see Lydgate's Minor Poems, edited by Mr. Halliwell for the Percy Society.

Beth nought bydaffed for your innocence,
But scharply tak on yow the governayle;
Empryntith wel this lessoun on your mynde,
For comun profyt, sith it may avayle.
Ye archewyves, stondith at defens,
Syn ye ben strong, as is a greet chamayle,
Ne suffre not that men yow don offens.
And sclendre wyves, felle as in batayle,
Beth egre as is a tyger yond in Inde;
Ay clappith as a mylle, I yow counsaile.
Ne drede hem not, do hem no reverence,
For though thin housbond armed be in mayle,
The arwes of thy crabbid eloquence[1]
Schal perse his brest, and eek his adventayle:
In gelousy I rede eek thou him bynde,
And thou schalt make him couche as doth a quayle.
If thou be fair, ther folk ben in presence
Schew thou thy visage and thin apparaile;
If thou be foul, be fre of thy despense,
To gete the frendes do ay thy travayle;
Be ay of chier as light as lef on lynde,
And let hem care and wepe, and wryng and wayle.[2]

THE PROLOGE OF THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

'WEPYNG and wailyng, care and other sorwe
I knowe y-nough, bothe on even and on morwe,'
Quod the Marchaund, 'and so doon other mo,
That weddin ben; I trowe that it be so,

---

[1] These three lines possess a force of diction that will remind the reader of Dryden; but are spoiled by the latter half of the succeeding line, *and eek his adventayle*, which is a perfect example of *bathos*.

[2] Tyrwhitt states that in some MSS. the following stanza is interposed:—

'This worthy clerk, when ended was his tale,
Oure hoste said and swore by cockes bones,
Me were lever than a barrel of ale

For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
I have a wyf, the worste that may be,
For though the feend to hir y-coupled were,
Sche wold him overmacche I dar wel swere.
What schuld I yow reherse in special
Hir high malice? sche is a schrewe at al.
Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Grisildes grete pacience,
And of my wyf the passyng cruelte.
Were I unbounden, al so mot I the,
I wolde never eft come in the snare.
We weddid men lyve in sorwe and care,
Assay it who so wil, and he schal fynde
That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I say not alle;
God schilde that it scholde so byfalle.
A! good sir host, I have y-weddid be
Thise monethes tuo, and more not, parde;
And yit I trowe that he, that al his lyve
Wyfles hath ben, though that men wold him rive
Unto the hert, ne couthe in no manere
Tellen so moche sorwe, as I now heere
Couthe telle of my wyfes cursednesse.'
'Now,' quod our ost, 'Marchaunt, so God yow blesse!
Sin ye so moche knowen of that art,
Ful hertily tellith us a part'
'Gladly,' quod he, 'but of myn oughne sore
For sory hert I telle may na more.'

My wyf at home had herd this legend ones:
This is a gentil tale for the nones,
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille,
But thing that wol not be, let it be stille.'

If these lines be Chaucer's, they can be considered only as a fragment of an unfinished prologue which he afterwards cancelled. He has made use of the same thought in the prologue which connects the *Monk's Tale* with the *Tale of Melibeus*. Mr. Wright says that in some MSS. the prologue given in the text is omitted, and in others a different prologue is given, and the *Clerkes Tale* is in some followed by the *Frankeleynes*. The prologue and arrangement of the Harl. MS., as given in the text, are, however, evidently the genuine ones.

THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

[THE earliest form in which this tale has been preserved is a Latin fable by Adolphus, written about 1315, containing the adventure of the pear-tree. There is also a Latin prose version in the Appendix to *Æsop's Fables*, printed in the 15th century. Mr. Wright has republished both these pieces in his *Latin Stories*. Chaucer, in all probability, derived the subject from a French fabliau older than either; enriching his original, as usual, with his own wit, and with those graphic pictures of manners which confer upon this tale a particular value. Pope's modern version, *January and May*, is familiar to all readers. The introduction of Pluto and Proserpine as the King and Queen of 'Faerie,' Tyrwhitt believes to belong exclusively to Chaucer. On this point generally, see page 73, notes 1 and 2.]

WHILOM ther was dwellyng in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was of Pavy,
In which he lyved in gret prosperite;
And fourty yer a wifles man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On wommen, ther as was his appetyt,
As doon these fooles that ben seculere.[1]
And whan that he was passed sixty yere,[2]
Were it for holyness or for dotage,
I can not say, but such a gret corrage
Hadde this knight to ben a weddid man,
That day and night he doth al that he can
Taspye wher that he mighte weddid be;
Praying our Lord to graunte him, that he

[1] This is, perhaps, ironical, uttered with a sly glance at the monk, frere, and other priests who were present; otherwise the propriety of the expression in the mouth of the merchant, himself a secular person, is not apparent.

[2] The reading in the text is taken from the Lansd. MS., in preference to that of the Harl. MS., which gives the age as xl., probably a transposition of lx. The knight, it seems, was wifeless for forty years after the usual time of marriage—about twenty.

Might oones knowen of that blisful lif
That is bitwix an housbond and his wyf,
And for to lyve under that holy bond
With which God first man to womman bond.
'Noon other lif,' sayd he, 'is worth a bene;
For wedlok is so holy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradis.'
Thus sayd this olde knight, that was so wys.
And certeinly, as soth as God is king,
To take a wyf it[1] is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hoor,
Than is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor;[2]
Than schuld he take a yong wif and a fair,
On which he might engendre him an hair,
And lede his lyf in mirthe and solace,
Wheras these bachileres synge allas,
Whan that thay fynde eny adversite
In love, which is but childes vanite.
And trewely it sit wel to be so,
That bachilers have ofte peyne and wo;
On brutil ground thay bulde, and brutelnesse
Thay fynde, whan thay wene sikernesse;
Thay lyve but as a brid other as a best,
In liberte and under noon arrest;
Ther as a weddid man, in his estate,
Lyvith his lif blisful[3] and ordinate,
Under the yok of mariage i-bounde;
Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abounde;
For who can be so buxom as a wyf?
Who is so trewe and eek so ententyf
To kepe him, seek and hool, as is his make?
For wele or woo sche wol him not forsake.

---

[1] *It* is adopted from Tyrwhitt, being necessary for the metre.

[2] All the knight's reasons for marriage are purposely made ridiculous; for no one would desire to have a wife who was the 'fruit of his treasure'—that is to say, who had married him for money.

[3] Harl. MS., *busily*.

Sche is not wery him to love and serve,
Theigh that he lay bedred til that he sterve.
And yet som clerkes seyn it is not so,
Of whiche Theofrast is oon of tho.
What fors though Theofrast liste lye?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for housbondrye,[1]
As for to spare in houshold thy dispense;
A trewe servaunt doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than thin oughne wif,
For sche wol clayme half part in al hir lif.
And if that thou be seek, so God me save,
Thyne verray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe the bet than sche that waytith ay
After thy good, and hath doon many a day.
And if that thou take a wif, be war
Of oon peril, which declare I ne dar.[2]
This entent, and an hundrid sithe wors,
Writith this man, ther God his bones curs.
But take no keep of al such vanite;
Deffy Theofrast, and herkne me.
A wyf is Goddes gifte verrayly;
Al other maner giftes hardily,
As landes, rentes, pasture, or comune,
Or other moeblis, ben giftes of fortune,
That passen as a schadow on a wal.
But dred not, if I playnly telle schal,
A wyf wil last and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than the lust peradventure.
Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;[3]
He which hath no wif I hold him schent;

---

[1] What follows, to the line beginning 'After thy good,' &c., is taken from Theophrastus, *Liber Aureolus*, quoted by Jerome.

[2] Of these two lines there are many versions in the different MSS. Tyrwhitt omits them altogether, and thinks that, even if genuine, they were intended as the opening of a new argument, which Chaucer afterwards cancelled.

[3] Ephes. v. 32. The difference between our version and the Vulgate, which Chaucer follows, arises from the ambiguity of the original word, μυστηριον, which is translated by the Latin *sacramentum*.

He lyveth helples, and is al desolate
(I speke of folk in seculer[1] estate).
And herken why, I say not this for nought,
That womman is for mannes help i-wrought.
The heighe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And saugh him al aloone body naked,
God of his grete goodnes sayde thanne,
Let us now make an helpe to this manne
Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.
Her may ye see, and here may ye preve,
That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,
His paradis terrestre and his desport.
So buxom and so vertuous is sche,
Thay mosten neede lyve in unite;
O fleisch thay ben, and on blood, as I gesse,
Have but oon hert in wele and in distresse.
A wyf! a! seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
How might a man have eny adversite
That hath a wyf? certes I can not say.
The joye that is betwixen hem tway
Ther may no tonge telle or herte think.
If he be pore, sche helpith him to swynk;
Sche kepith his good, and wastith never a del;
And al that her housbond list, sche likith it wel;
Sche saith nought oones nay, whan he saith ye;
Do this, saith he; al redy, sir, saith sche.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious!
Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuous,
And so comendid, and approved eek,
That every man that holt him worth a leek,
Upon his bare knees ought al his lyf
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
Or pray to God oon him for to sende
To be with him unto his lyves ende.
For than his lyf is set in sikernesse;
He may not be deceyved, as I gesse,

[1] The knight means to say, 'I do not mean to apply this to th clergy, but to the laity—to secular persons.'

So that the worche after his wyfes red,
Than may be boldely bere up his heed,
Thay ben so trewe, and also so wyse,
For whiche, if thou wolt do as the wyse,
Do alway so, as womman wol the rede.
Lo how that Jacob, as the clerkes rede,
By good counseil of his moder Rebecke,
Band the kydes skyn about his nekke;
For which his fader benesoun he wan.[1]
Lo Judith, as the story telle can,
By wys counseil sche Goddes poepel kept,
And slough him Oliphernus whil he slept.
Lo Abygaille,[2] by good counseil how sche
Savyd hir housbond Nabal,[3] whan that he
Schold han ben slayn. And loke, Hester also[4]
By good counseil delivered out of wo
The poeple of God, and made him Mardoche
Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.
Ther nys no thing in gre superlatif
(As saith Senec)[5] above an humble wyf.
Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun[6] byt,
Sche schal comaunde, and thou schalt suffre it,
And yit sche wil obeye of curtesye.
A wif is keper of thin housbondrye:
Wel may the sike man wayle and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wyf the hous to kepe.
I warne the, if wisely thou wilt wirche,
Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loveth his chirche;[7]
If thou lovest thiself, thou lovest thy wyf.
No man hatith his fleissch, but in his lif

[1] Gen. xxvii. [2] 1 Sam. xv.

[3] Harl. MS., *Nacab*, a mere clerical error.

[4] Harl. MS., for *Hester also*, reads *after also*, and for *Mardoche*, *Mandoche*; but these are obviously clerical errors.

[5] Tyrwhitt informs us that in the margin of MS. C. i., is given this quotation from Seneca:—'Sicut nihil est superius benignâ conjuge, ita nihil est crudelius infestâ muliere.'

[6] The *nom de guerre* of the compiler of the *Disticha*, a well-known mediæval collection of aphorisms. The passage is given in the margin of MS. C. i.:—'Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento.' [7] Ephes. v.

He fostrith it, and therfore warne I the
Cherissh thy wyf, or thou schalt never the.
Housbond and wif, what so men jape or pleye,
Of worldly folk holden the righte weye;
Thay ben so knyt, ther may noon harm bytyde,
And nameliche upon the wyves syde.
For which this January, of which I tolde,
Considered hath inwith his dayes olde
The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage honey-swete.
And for his frendes on a day he sente
To tellen hem theffect of his entent.
With face sad, he hath hem this tale told;
He sayde, 'Frendes, I am hoor and old,
And almost (God woot) at my pittes brinke,[1]
Upon my soule som what most I thynke.
I have my body folily dispendid,
Blessed be God that it schal be amendid;
For I wil be certeyn a weddid man,
And that anoon in al the hast I can,
Unto som mayde, fair and tender of age.
I pray yow helpith for my mariage
Al sodeynly, for I wil not abyde;
And I wil fonde tespien on my syde,
To whom I may be weddid hastily.
But for als moche as ye ben mo than I,
Ye schul rather such a thing aspien
Than I, and wher me lust beste to allien.
But oo thing warne I yow, my frendes deere,
I wol noon old wyf have in no manere;
Sche schal not passe sixtene yer certayn.
Old fisch and young fleisch, that wold I have ful fayn.
Bet is,' quod he, 'a pyk than a pikerell,
And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.
I wil no womman twenty yer of age,
It nys but bene-straw and gret forage.

[1] At the brink of my grave.

And eek these olde wydewes (God it woot)
Thay can so moche craft of Wades[1] boot,
So moche broken harm whan that hem list,
That with hem schuld I never lyven in rest.
For sondry scolis maken subtil clerkes;
Womman of many a scole[2] half a clerk is.
But certeyn, a yong thing may men gye,
Right as men may warm wax with hondes plye.
Wherfor I say yow plenerly in a clause,
I wil noon old wyf han right for that cause.
For if so were I hadde so meschaunce,
That I in hir ne couthe have no plesaunce,
Then schuld I lede my lyf in advoutrie,
And go streight to the devel whan I dye.
Ne children schuld I noon upon hir geten;
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that myn heritage schulde falle
In straunge hond; and thus I telle yow alle.
I doute not, I wot the cause why
Men scholde wedde; and forthermor woot I,
Ther spekith many man of mariage,
That wot nomore of it than wot my page
For whiche causes man schuld take a wyf.
If he ne may not chast be by his lif,[3]
Take him a wif with gret devocioun,
Bycause of lawful procreacioun

---

[1] Tyrwhitt, after quoting Speght's words, 'Concerning Wade and his bote called Guingelot, as also his strange exploits in the same, because the matter is long and fabulous, I passe it over,' adds, 'Tantamne rem tam negligenter?' It is curious that no history of these celebrated adventures has come down to us, though so popular in the middle ages. Mr. Wright says that M. Fr. Michel, in an essay, *Sur Vade*, has collected all that is known of this famous northern hero. He appears to have been a sort of Scandinavian Ulysses, and is, therefore, cited as an example of craft and cunning. See *Troilus and Creseide*, b. iii:—

'He songe, she pleyde, he tolde a tale of Wade.'

[2] Harl. MS., *skile*.

[3] This argument, taken from the old English *Rituale*, is retained in the exhortation prefixed to the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer.

Of children, to thonour of God above,
And not oonly for paramour and for love;
And for thay schulde leccherye eschiewe,
And yeld oure dettes whan that it is due;
Or for that ilk man schulde helpen other
In meschief, as a suster schal the brother,
And lyve in chastite ful holily.
But, sires, by your leve, that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dar make avaunt,
I fele my lemys stark and suffisaunt
To doon al that a man bilongeth unto;
I wot my selve best what I may do.
'Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossemith er that the fruyt i-waxe be,
A blossemy tre is neither dryo nę deed;
I fele me no wher hoor but on myn heed.
Myn herte and al my lymes ben as greene,
As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to seene.
And synnes ye han herd al myn entent,
I pray yow to my wille ye assent.'
Diverse men diversly him tolde
Of mariage many ensamples olde;
Some blamed it, some praised it certayn;
But atte laste, schortly for to sayn,
(As alday fallith altercacioun,
Bitwixe frendes in dispitesoun)
Ther fel a strif bitwen his bretheren tuo,
Of which that oon was clepid Placebo,[1]
Justinus sothly cleped was that other.
Placebo sayde: 'O January, brother,
Ful litel need had ye, my lord so deere,
Counseil to axe of eny that is heere;
But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
That yow ne likith for your heigh prudence
To wayve fro the word of Salamon.
This word, said he, unto us everychoon:

[1] This name indicates his complaisance. See *ante*, p. 116, note

Werk al thing by counsail, thus sayd he,
And thanne schaltow nought repente the.
But though that Salamon speke such a word,
Myn owne deere brother and my lord,
So wisly God bring my soule at rest,[1]
I holde your oughne counseil is the best.
For, brother myn, of me tak this motif,
I have now ben a court-man al my lyf,
And God wot, though that I unworthy be,
I have standen in ful gret degre
Abouten lordes in ful high estat;
Yit had I never with noon of hem debaat,
I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it ferm and stable,
I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
A ful gret fool is eny counselour,
That servith any lord of high honour,
That dar presume, or oones thenken it,
That his counseil schuld passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes ben no fooles by my fay.
Ye have your self y-spoken heer to day
So heigh sentens, so holly, and so wel,
That I consente, and conferme every del
Your wordes alle, and youre oppinioun.
By God ther is no man in al this toun
Ne in Ytaile, couthe better have sayd;
Crist holdith him of this ful wel apayd.
And trewely it is an heigh corrage
Of any man that stopen is in age,
To take a yong wyf, by my fader kyn;
Your herte hongith on a joly pyn.
Doth now in this matier right as yow lest,
For fynally I hold it for the best.'
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde.

---

[1] Harl. MS., *at ese and rest*, which spoils the metre.

'Now, brother myn, be pacient I yow pray,
Syns ye have sayd, and herknith what I say:
Senek amonges other wordes wyse
Saith, that a man aught him wel avyse,
To whom he giveth his lond or his catel.
And syns I aught avyse me right wel,
To whom I give my good away fro me,
Wel more I aught advised for to be
To whom I give my body; for alwey
I warn yow wel it is no childes pley
To take a wyf withoute avisement.
Men most enquere (this is myn assent)
Wher sche be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or eny other way a schrewe,
A chyder, or a wastour of thy good,
Or riche or pore, or elles man is wood.
Al be it so, that no man fynde schal
Noon in this world, that trottith hool in al,[1]
Neyther man, ne best, such as men can devyse.
But natheles it aught y-nough suffise
With any wyf, if so were that sche hadde
Mo goode thewes than hir vices badde;
And al this askith leyser to enquere.
For God woot, I have weped many a tere
Ful prively, syns I have had a wyf.
Prayse who so wil a weddid mannes lif,
Certes I fynd in it but cost and care,
And observaunce of alle blisses bare.
And yit, God woot, myn neighebours aboute,
And namely of wommen many a route,
Sayn that I have the moste stedefast wyf,
And eek the meekest oon that berith lyf;
But I woot best, wher wryngith me my scho.[2]
Ye may for me right as yow liste do.

[1] A metaphor from horses, meaning, No woman is without faults, just as there is no horse which will trot perfectly sound at all times.

[2] See *ante*, p. 59, note 4.

Avysith yow, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage;
And namly with a yong wif and a fair.
By him that made water, eorthe, and air,
The yongest man, that is in al this route,
Is busy y-nough to bring it wel aboute
To have his wif alloone, trustith me;
Ye schul not please hir fully yeres thre,
This is to say, to doon hir ful plesaunce.
A wyf axith ful many an observaunce.
I pray yow that ye be not evel apayd.'
'Wel,' quod this January, 'and hastow sayd?
Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbis!
I counte nought a panyer ful of herbes
Of scole termes; wiser men than thow,
As I have sayd, assenten her right now
Unto my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?'
'I say it is a cursed man,' quod he,
'That lettith matrimoigne sicurly.'
And with that word thay rysen up sodeinly,
And ben assented fully, that he scholde
Be weddid whan him lust, and wher he wolde.
The fantasy and the curious busynesse
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
Of January aboute his mariage.
Many a fair schap, and many a fair visage,
Ther passith thorugh his herte night by night.
As who so took a mirrour polissched bright,
And set it in a comun market place,
Than schuld he se many a figure pace
By his mirrour; and in the same wise
Gan January in his thought devyse
Of maydens, which that dwellid him bisyde;
He wist not where that he might abyde.
For though that oon have beaute in hir face,
Another stant so in the poeples grace
For hir sadness and hir benignite,
That of the poeple grettest vois hath sche;

And som were riche and hadde badde name.
But natheles, bitwix ernest and game,
He atte last appoynted him an 'oon,
And let al other fro his herte goon,
And ches hir of his oughne auctorite,
For love is blynd al day, and may not se.
And whan he was into bedde brought,
He purtrayed in his hert and in his thought
Hir freische beaute, and hir age tendre,
Hir myddel smal, hir armes long and sclendre,
Hir wise governaunce, hir gentilesse,
Hir wommanly beryng, and hir sadnesse.
And whan that he on hir was condescendid,
Him thought his chois mighte nought be amendid:
For whan that he himself concludid hadde,
Him thought ech other mannes witte[1] so badde,
That impossible it were to repplie
Agayn his choys: this was his fantasie.
His frendes sent he to, at his instaunce,
And prayed hem to doon him that plesaunce,
That hastily thay wolde to him come;
He wold abrigge her labour alle and some.
Nedith no more for him to gon ne ryde,
He was appoynted ther he wold abyde.
Placebo cam, and eek his frendes soone,
And althirfirst he bad hem alle a boone,
That noon of hem noon argumentis make
Agayn the purpos which that he had take;
Which purpos was plesaunt to God, sayd he,
And verray ground of his prosperite.
He sayd, ther was a mayden in that toun,
Which that of beaute hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, sche were of smal degre,
Suffisith him hir youthe[2] and hir beaute;

[1] Harl. MS., *trwf*. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS.
[2] Harl. MS., *trouthe*.

Which mayde, he sayd, he wold have to his wyf,
To lede in ease and holinesse his lyf;
And thanked God, that he might have hir al,
That no wight with his blisse parten schal;
And preyed hem to laboure in this neede,
And schapen that he faile not to speede.
For than he sayd, his spirit was at ease;
'Than is,' quod he, 'no thing may me displease,
Save oon thing prikkith in my conscience,
The which I wil reherse in your presence.
I have herd sayd,' quod he, 'ful yore ago,
Ther may no man have parfyt blisses tuo,
This is to say, in erthe and eek in hevene.
For though he kepe him fro the synnes sevene,[1]
And eek from ylk a braunche of thilke tre,
Yit is ther so parfyt felicite
And so gret ease and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast now in myn age,
That I schal lede now so mery a lyf,
So delicat, withoute wo and stryf,
That I schal have myn heven in erthe heere.
For sith that verrey heven is bought so deere
With tribulacioun and gret penaunce,
How schuld I thanne, that live in such plesaunce
As alle weddid men doon with her wyves,
Come to blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,
Assoilith me this questioun, I yow preye.'
Justinus, which that hated his folye,
Answerd anoon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrigge,
He wolde noon auctorite alegge,
But sayde, 'Sir, so ther be noon obstacle
Other than this, God of his high miracle,
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche,
That er ye have your rightes of holy chirche,

[1] The seven deadly sins, from which all the others branch out as from a stem.

Ye may repente of weddid mannes lyf,
In which ye sayn ther is no wo ne stryf;
And ellis God forbede, but he sente
A weddid man grace him to repente
Wel ofte, rather than a sengle man.
And therfor, sire, the beste reed I can,
Dispaire yow nought, but have in youre memorie,
Peradventure she may be your purgatorie;
Sche may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than schal your soule up to heven skippe
Swyfter than doth an arwe out of a bowe.
I hope to God herafter you shuln knowe,
That ther nys noon so gret felicite
In mariage, ne nevermor schal be,
That you schal lette of your savacioun,
So that ye use, as skile is and resoun,
The lustes of your wyf attemperely,
And that ye please hir not to amorously;
And that ye kepe yow eek from other synne.
My tale is doon, for my witt is thynne.
Beth not agast hereof, my brother deere,
But let us waden out of this matiere.
The wif of Bathe,[1] if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space;
Fareth now well, God have yow in his grace.'
And with that word this Justinus and his brother
Han tak her leve, and ech of hem of other.
And whan they saugh that it most needis be,
Thay wroughten so by sleight and wys trete,
That sche this mayden, which that Mayhus hight,
As hastily as ever that sche might,
Schal weddid be unto this Januarie.
I trow it were to longe yow to tarie,
If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond,
By which that sche was feoffed in his lond;

[1] Justinus is here made to speak as if he had actually heard the *Wyf of Bathes Tale*, which had been just recited.

Or for to herken of hir riche array.
But finally y-comen is that day,
That to the chirche bothe ben thay went,
For to receyve the holy sacrament.[1]
Forth comth the preost, with stoole[2] about his necke,
And bad hir be lik Sarra and Rebecke[3]
In wisdom and in trouth of mariage;
And sayd his orisouns, as is usage,
And crouched[4] hem, and bad God schuld hem blesse,
And made al secur y-nough with holinesse.
Thus ben thay weddid with solempnite;
And atte feste sittith he and sche
With othir worthy folk upon the deyes.
Al ful of joy and blis in the paleys,
And ful of instrumentz, and of vitaile,
The moste deintevous of al Ytaile.
Biforn hem stood such instruments of soun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun,
Ne maden never such a melodye,
At every cours ther cam loud menstralcye,[5]

---

[1] Either the sacrament of marriage, or the holy eucharist, which was then usually received by the newly married, a custom still enjoined by the English Book of Common Prayer. See rubric after marriage service.

[2] The stole is a strip of silk, which used formerly to be richly embroidered and fringed at the ends, worn round the neck with the ends hanging down before by priests, and over the left shoulder by deacons, and is supposed to symbolize the 'yoke' of Christ.

[3] The exhortation to be like Sarah and Rebecca is retained in the English service.

[4] He crouched them means he made the sign of the cross over them. Thus, in Skelton's *Colin Clout*, Ryott is represented—

> 'And by his syde his whynarde, and his pouche,
> The devyll might dance therein for any crouche.'

Here crouche means a piece of money marked with a cross, to which symbol the devil is supposed to have a peculiar antipathy. The form in the *Rituale Romanum* is, 'Ego conjungo vos in matrimonium. In nomine Patris + et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.' The mark means that the priest was to sign them in this form with his hand.

[5] There is an example of the custom of ushering in the several courses at solemn feasts with music in Dugdale's *Origines Juridiciales*, p. 155, where he describes the observances at Christmas in the Inner Temple. At dinner, 'at the first course is served in a fair and large

That never tromped Joab[1] for to heere,
Ne he Theodomas yit half so cleere
At Thebes, whan the cite was in doute.
Bachus the wyn hem schenchith al aboute,
And Venus laughith upon every wight,
(For January was bycome hir knight,
And wolde bothe assayen his corrage
In liberte and eek in mariage)
And with hir fuyrbrond in hir hond aboute
Daunceth bifore the bryde and al the route.
And certeynly I dar right wel say this,
Ymeneus, that god of weddyng is,

---

bore's head, upon a silver platter, *with minstralcye*.' Holinshed (*Chron.* iii. 76) says that in the year 1170, Henry II. 'served his sonne at the table as sewer, bringing up the bore's head ('when the principal dish) *with trumpets before it according to the manner*.' In the collection of Christmas Carols, published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521, is the following specimen of the 'minstralcye' used on such occasions:—

'Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

The bore's head in hand bring I,
With garlans gay and rosemary;
I pray you all singe merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

The bore's head, I understand,
Is the chefe servyce in the lande,
Loke, wherever it be fande,
Servite cum cantico,' &c.

Warton says that this carol, with many variations, was still retained in his time at Queen's Coll., Oxford. In another, contained in the 'Parkington MS.,' a miscellany of the fifteenth century, is a bill of fare, which would puzzle the most accomplished cook of modern times:—

'Hey, hey, hey, hey, the borys hede is armyd gay.

* * * * * *

Then commys in the second kowrs with mykylle pryde,
The crannus, the herrouns, the bitters by ther syde,
The pertrychys and the plowers, the woodcokes and the snyt.
With hey, hey,' &c.

[1] Joab is David's captain of the host, and is often represented as 'blowing the trumpet,' to call together the army of Judah. Tyrwhitt supposes that Theodamas is a character in some romantic history of Thebes. *He* is prefixed emphatically, as in p. 166, *him* Oliphernus, *him* Mardoche.

Seigh never his lif so mery a weddid man.
Holde thy pees, thow poete Marcian,[1]
That writest us that ilke weddyng merye
Of hir Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe;
To smal is bothe thy penne and eek thy tonge
For to descrive of this mariage.
Whan tender youthe hath weddid stoupyng age,
Ther is such mirthe that it may not be write;
Assaieth it your self, than may ye wyte
If that I lye or noon in this mateere.
Mayus, that sit with so benigne a cheere,
Hir to bihold it seemed fayerye;[2]
Queen Esther loked never with such an ye
On Assuere, so meke a look hath sche;
I may not yow devyse al hir beaute;
But thus moche of hir beaute telle I may,
That sche was lyk the brighte morw of May,
Fulfild of alle beaute and plesaunce.
This January is ravyscht in a traunce,
At every tyme he lokith in hir face,
But in his hert he gan hir to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hir streyne
Harder than ever Paris did Eleyne.
But natheles yit had he gret pite
That thilke night offenden hir most he,
And thought: 'Alas! O tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighte wel endure
Al my corrage, it is so scharp and keene;
I am agast ye schul it not susteene.
For God forbede, that I dede al my might.
Now wolde God that it were woxe night,
And that the night wold stonden evermo.
I wold that al this poeple were ago.'

---

[1] An African, who lived in the time of Heraclius, and wrote at Rome, among other things, a poem on grammar and the arts, under the name of *De Nuptiis Philologiæ et Mercurii*.

[2] It seemed like being in fairy-land.

And fynally he doth al his labour,
As he best mighte, savyng his honour,
To hast hem from the mete in subtil wise.
The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse,
And after that men daunce, and drynke fast,
And spices al about the hous thay cast,
And ful of joy and blis is every man,
Al but a squier, that hight Damyan,
Which karf to-for the knight ful many a day;
He was so ravyssht on his lady May,
That for the verray peyne he was nigh wood:
Almost he swelt and swowned ther he stood;
So sore hath Venus hurt him with hir brond,
As that sche bare it daunsyng in hir hond.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this tyme telle I;
But ther I lete him now his wo compleyne,
Til freisshe May wol rewen on his peyne.
O perilous fuyr, that in the bed-straw bredith!
O famuler fo, that his service bedith!
O servaunt traitour, false homly hewe,[1]
Lyk to the nedder in bosom sleighe[2] untrewe,
God schild us alle from your acqueintance!
O January, dronken in plesaunce
Of mariage, se how thy Damyan,
Thyn oughne squier and thy borne man,
Entendith for to do the vilonye;
God graunte the thin homly fo espye.
For in this world nys worse pestilence
Than homly foo, alday in thy presence.
Parfourmed hath the sonne his ark diourne,
No lenger may the body of him sojourne

---

[1] Mr. Wright has restored, from the Harl. MS., the true reading given in the text, (corrupted by Tyrwhitt into *O false of holy hewe,*) and explains it thus: *Hew* is from the Anglo-Saxon *hiwa*, a servant; *homly hew* means, therefore, domestic servant.

[2] *Sleighe* is introduced from the Lansd. MS. to complete the metre.

On thorisonte, as in that latitude;
Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,
Gan oversprede themesperie aboute;
For which departed is the lusti route
Fro January, with thank on every side.
Hoom to her houses lustily thay ryde,
Wher as they doon her thinges, as hem leste,
And whan they seigh her tyme thay goon to reste.
Soone after that this hasty Januarie
Wold go to bed, he wold no lenger tarie.
He drinkith ypocras,[1] clarre, and vernage
Of spices hote, to encrese his corrage;
And many a letuary had he ful fyn,
Such as the cursed monk daun[2] Constantin
Hath writen in his book *de Coitu;*
To ete hem alle he wold[3] no thing eschieu.
And to his prive frendes thus sayd he:
'For Goddes love, as soone as it may be,
Let voyden al this hous in curteys wise.'
And thay han doon right as he wold devyse.

---

[1] *Ypocras* is a mixture of wine and spices, probably so called because prescribed by Hippocrates. *Clarre* is wine clarified with honey. *Vernage* is the wine *de agro Veronensi*. It was usual to drink spiced wine immediately before going to bed; and in the court of France there was an officer specially appointed to superintend this branch of the household, and called *l'espicier*. Thus, in *The Squier of Low Degree*, the King of Hungary attempts to comfort his daughter by promising her all sorts of luxuries, among others

'Ye shall have rumney and malespine,
Both *ypocrasse* and *vernage* wine.
* * * *
Both clare, pymeht, and rochell.'

For mixing honey with wine our ancestors had the authority of the prince of Epicureans:—

'Nisi Hymettia mella Falerno
Ne biberis diluta.'—HOR. *Sat.* lib. ii.; *Sat.* ii. 15.

[2] *Daun* is a corruption of Dom, for Dominus, the title usually given to the Benedictines, as Dom Martene, in allusion to which La Fontaine, in his fables, maliciously calls the hog Dom Porceaux. This Dom Constantine was a writer on medicine, and flourished about A.D. 1080. —*Fabric. Bibl. Med. Ætat.*

[3] For *wold* the Harl. MS. reads *nas*.

Men drinken, and the travers drawe anoon;
The bruyd was brought abedde as stille as stoon;
And whan the bed was with the prest y-blessid;[1]
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed,
And January hath fast in armes take
His freisshe May, his paradys, his make.
He lullith hir, he kissith hir full ofte;
With thikke bristlis on his berd unsofte,
Lik to the skyn of houndfisch, scharp as brere,
(For he was schave al newe in his manere)
He rubbith hir about hir tendre face,
And sayde thus: 'Allas! I mot trespace
To yow, my spouse, and yow gretly offende,
Or tyme come that I wol doun descende;
But natheles considerith this,' quod he,
'Ther nys no werkmen, whatsoever he be,
That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
This wol be doon at leysir parfitly.
It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
In trewe wedlock coupled be we tweye;
And blessed be the yok that we ben inne,
For in our actes we mow do no synne.
A man may do no synne with his wif,
Ne hurt himselven with his oughne knyf:
For we han leve to play us by the lawe.'
Thus laborith he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he takith a sop in fyn clarre,
And upright in his bed than sittith he.
And after that he song ful lowd and clere,
And kissed his wyf, and made wantoun cheere.

---

[1] The following is a translation of the form of blessing the nuptial bed to be found in the service books used before the Reformation:—

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
R. Who hath made heaven and earth.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with thy spirit.

O Lord, bless this bed; that all who rest therein may be in peace with thee, and continue in thy will, and grow old, and multiply in length of days, and finally come to thy heavenly kingdom, through Christ.

He was al coltissh, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargoun, as a flekked pye.
The slakke skin about his nekke schakith,[1]
Whil that he song, so chaunteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hir hert,
Whan sche him saugh up sittyng in his schert,
In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
Sche praysith nought his pleying worth a bene.
Than sayd he thus: 'My reste wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake.'
And doun he layd his heed and sleep til prime.
And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,
Up riseth January, but freissche May
Holdith hir chamber unto the fourthe day,
As usage is of wyves for the best.
For every labour some tyme moot have rest,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to say, no lyves creature,
Be it of fissch, or brid, or best, or man.
Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,
That languyssheth for love, as ye schuln here;
Therefore I speke to him in this manere.
I say, 'O sely Damyan, allas!
Answere to my demaunde, as in this caas,
How schaltow to thy lady, freissche May,
Telle thy woo? Sche wol alway say nay;
Eek if thou speke, sche wol thy woo bywreye;
God be thy help, I can no better seye.'
This seke Damyan in Venus fuyr
So brennith, that he deyeth for desir;
For which he put his lyf in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wo endure,
But prively a penner[2] gan he borwe,
And in a letter wrot he al his sorwe,

---

[1] Harl. MS. *slaketh*, which is a repetition of the former idea. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS.

[2] Mr. Wright says that a penner was a case containing writing-

In maner of a compleynt or of a lay,
Unto his faire freissche lady May.
And in a purs of silk, heng on his schert,
He hath it put, and layd it at his hert.
The moone that a-noon was thilke day
That January hath weddid freissche May
In tuo of Taure, was into Cancre gliden;
So long hath Mayus in hir chambre abiden,
As custom is unto these nobles alle.[1]
A bryde schal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes foure or thre dayes atte lest
I-passed ben, than let hir go to the fest.
The fourthe day complet fro noon to noon,
Whan that the heighe masse was i-doon,
In halle sitte this January and May,
As freissch as is the brighte someres day.
And so bifelle, that this goode man
Remembrid him upon this Damyan,
And sayde, 'Seinte Mary! how may this be,
That Damyan entendith not to me?
Is he ay seek? or how may this bityde?'
His squiers, which that stoode ther bisyde,
Excusid him, bycause of his syknesse,
Which letted him to doon his busynesse;
Noon other cause mighte make him tarie.
'That me for-thinketh,' quod this Januarie;
'He is a gentil squyer, by my trouthe,
If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.
He is as wys, discret, and eek secre,
As any man I wot of his degre,
And therto manerly and servysable,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.

---

materials, and quotes an early vocabulary, called *Nominale*, in which, among the 'nomina rerum pertinentium clerico,' is *pennare, a penner*. In Occleve's portrait (see vol. 1. p. 15) Chaucer is represented with a penner suspended from his neck.

[1] This appears to be the origin of our custom of spending the honey-moon in retirement.

But after mete, as soon as ever I may,
I wol myself visit him, and eek May,
To doon him al the confort that I can.'
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounte and his gentilesse
He wolde so comfort in seekenesse
His squyer, for it was a gentil deede.
'Dame,' quod this January, 'tak good heede,
After mete, ye with your wommen alle,
(Whan ye han ben in chambre out of this halle)
That alle ye goo to se this Damyan;
Doth him desport, he is a gentil man,[1]
And tellith him that I wil him visite,
Have I no thing but rested me a lyte;
And spedith yow faste, for I wol abyde
Til that ye slepe faste by my syde.'
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A squier, that was marchal of his halle,
And told him certeyn thinges that he wolde.
This freissche May hath streight hir wey i-holde
With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.
Doun by his beddes syde sat sche than,
Comfortyng him as goodly as sche may.
This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,
In secre wise, his purs, and eek his bille,
In which that he i-writen had his wille,
Hath put into hir hond withouten more,
Save that he siketh wonder deepe and sore,
And softely to hir right thus say he;
'Mercy, and that ye not discover me;
For I am deed,[2] if that this thing be kidde.'
This purs hath sche inwith hir bosom hud,

[1] This is an illustration of the fact, that in the middle ages men of good family frequently accepted service in the households of people of rank. Damyan, here called a 'gentil man,' is elsewhere described as being a *homly hew*, or domestic servant, in the house of January.

[2] Harl. MS. runs on as follows:—

'if that this thing discovered be,
This purs in hir bosom hud hath sche.'

And went hir way; ye gete no more of me;
But unto January comen is sche,
That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.
He takith hir, and kissith hir ful ofte;
And layd him doun to slepe, and that anoon.
Sche feyned hir as that sche moste goon
Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede;
And whan sche of this bille hath taken heede,
Sche rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
And into the privy softely it cast.
Who studieth now but faire freissche May?
Adoun by olde January sche lay,
That slepith, til that the coughe hath him awaked;
Anoon he prayde stripen hir al naked,
He wold of hir, he sayd, have some plesaunce;
Hir clothis dede him, he sayde, som grevaunce.
And sche obeieth, be hir lief or loth.
But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wroughte I dar not telle,
Or whethir it semed him paradys or helle;
But here I lete hem werken in her wise
Til evensong rong, and than thay most arise.
Whethir it be by desteny or adventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or by constellacioun, that in such estate
The heven stood that tyme fortunate,
As for to putte a bille of Venus werkis
(For alle thing hath tyme, as seyn these clerkis)
To eny womman for to gete hir love,
I can not say; but grete God above,
That knowith that noon acte is causeles,
He deme of al, for I wil holde my pees.
But soth is this, how that this freisshe May
Hath take such impressioun that day,
Of pite on this sike Damyan,
That from hir herte sche ne dryve can

The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS., and is adopted because it avoids the repetition of rhymes in the other reading.

The remembraunce for to doon him ease.
'Certeyn,' thought sche, 'whom that this thing dis-
I rekke not, for her I him assure, [pleas
To love him best of eny creature,
Though he no more hadde than his scherte.'
Lo, pite renneth soone in gentil herte.[1]
Heer may ye see, how excellent fraunchise
In womman is whan thay narow hem avyse.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many oon,
That hath an hert as hard as is a stoon,
Which wold han lete sterven in the place
Wel rather than han graunted him her grace;
And hem rejoysen in her cruel pride,
And rekken nought to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfillid of pite,
Right of hir hond a letter maked sche,
In which sche grauntith him hir verray grace;
Ther lakkid nought but oonly day and place,
Wher that sche might unto his lust suffise;
For it schal be, right as he wol devyse.
And whan sche saugh hir tyme upon a day
To visite this Damyan goth May,
And subtilly this lettre doun sche thruste
Under his pylow, rede it if him luste.
Sche takith him by the honde, and hard him twiste
So secrely, that no wight of it wiste,
And bad him be al hool, and forth sche wente
To January, whan that he for hir sente.
Up ryseth Damyan the nexte morwe,
Al passed was his siknes and his sorwe.
He kembith him, he pruneth him and pyketh,
He doth al that unto his lady likith;
And eek to January he goth as lowe
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.[2]
He is so plesaunt unto every man,
(For craft is al, who so that do it can)

[1] This proverbial expression occurs before, vol. i., p. 145.
[2] As we say, a dog for the gun.

That every wight is fayn to speke him good;
And fully in his ladys grace he stood.
Thus lete I Damyan about his neede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.
Some clerkes holden that felicite[1]
Stant in delit, and therfor certeyn he
This noble January, with al his might
In honest wise as longith to a knight,
Schop him to lyve ful deliciously.
His housyng, his array, as honestly
To his degre was maked as a kynges.
Amonges other of his honest thinges
He had a gardyn walled al with stoon,
So fair a gardyn wot I no wher noon.
For out of doute I verrely suppose,
That he that wroot the Romauns of the Rose,[2]
Ne couthe of it the beaute wel devyse;
Ne Priapus ne might not wel suffice,
Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle
The beaute of the gardyn, and the welle,
That stood under a laurer alway greene.
Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene[3]
Preserpina, and al the fayerie,
Desporten hem and maken melodye
Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.
This noble knight, this January the olde,
Such deynte hath in it to walk and pleye,
That he wold no wight suffre bere the keye,
Save he himself, for of the smale wyket
He bar alway of silver a smal cliket,
With which whan that him list he it unschette.
And whan he wolde pay his wyf hir dette

[1] Alluding to the Epicurean philosophy.

[2] The *Roman de la Rose* was begun by William of Louis, who died about 1260, and was finished by John of Meun, one of the wits of the court of Charles le Bel. The difficulties of a lover in obtaining the object of his love are depicted under the allegory of a rose in a beautiful garden, surrounded by walls and hedges.

[3] See *ante*, p. 73, note 1.

In somer sesoun, thider wold he go,
And May his wyf, and no wight but thay tuo;
And thinges which that weren not doon in bedde,
He in the gardyn parformed hem and spedde.
And in this wise many a mery day
Lyved this January and freische May;
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O sodeyn hap! o thou fortune unstable!
Lyk to the scorpioun so desceyvable,
That flaterist with thin heed whan thou wilt stynge;
Thy tayl is deth, thur thin envenymynge.
O britel joye! o sweete venym queynte!
O monster, that so subtily canst peynte
Thyn giftes, under hew of stedfastnesse,
That thou desceyvest bothe more and lesse!
Why hastow January thus deceyved,
That haddist him for thy fulle frend receyved?
And now thou hast byreft him bothe his yen,
For sorw of which desireth he to dyen.
Allas! this noble January fre,
Amyd his lust and his prosperite
Is woxe blynd, and that al sodeynly.
He wepith and he weyleth pitously;
And therwithal, the fuyr of jalousye
(Lest that his wif schuld falle in some folye)
So brent his herte that he wolde fayn
That som man bothe hir and him had slayn;
For neyther after his deth, nor in his lyf,
Ne wold he that sche were love ne wyf,
But ever lyve as wydow in clothes blake,
Soul[1] as the turtil that lost hath hir make.
But atte last, after a moneth or tweye,
His sorwe gan aswage, soth to seye.

[1] Sole, alone, or a widow, like the turtle, &c. *Femme sole* is the legal phrase for an unmarried woman.

For whan he wist it may noon other be,
He paciently took his adversite;
Save out of doute he may not forgoon,
That he nas jalous evermore in oon;
Which jalousie it was so outrageous,
That neyther in halle, ne in noon other hous,
Ne in noon other place never the mo
He nolde suffre hir to ryde or go,
But if that he had hond on hir alway.
For which ful ofte wepeth freische May,
That loveth Damyan so benighely,
That sche moot outher deyen sodeinly,
Or elles sche moot han him as hir lest;
She waytith whan hir herte wolde brest.
Upon that other syde Damyan
Bicomen is the sorwfulleste man
That ever was, for neyther night ne day
Ne might he speke a word to fressche May,
As to his purpos, of no such matiere,
But if that January most it heere,
That had an hond upon hir evermo.
But natheles, by writyng to and fro,
And prive signes, wist he what sche ment,
And sche knew eek the fyn of his entent.
O January, what might it thee availe,
If thou might see as fer as schippes saile?
For as good is blynd deceyved be,
As to be deceyved whan a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For al that ever he couthe poure or prien,
Yet was he blent, as, God wot, so ben moo,
That weneth wisly that it be nought so;
Passe over is an ease,[1] I say no more.
This freissche May, that I spak of so yore,
In warm wex hath emprynted the cliket,
That January bar of the smale wiket,

[1] Apparently a proverbial expression, similar to 'Of little meddling comes great ease.'

By which into his gardyn ofte he went,
And Damyan that knew al hir entent
The cliket counterfeted prively;
Ther nys no more to say, but hastily
Som wonder by this cliket schal betyde,
Which he schal heeren, if ye wol abyde.
O noble Ovyde, wel soth saistow, God woot,
What sleight is it though it be long and hoot,
That he nyl fynd it out in some manere?
By Piramus and Thesbe may men leere;
Though thay were kept ful longe streyt over al,
Thay ben accorded, rownyng thurg a wal,
Ther no wight couthe han found out swich a sleight.
For now to purpos; er that dayes eyght
Were passed of the moneth of Juyl, bifille
That January hath caught so gret a wille,
Thorugh eggyng of his wyf, him for to pleye
In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye,
That in a morwe unto this May saith he:
'Rys up, my wif, my love, my lady fre;
The turtlis vois is herd,[1] my douve sweet;
The wynter is goon, with his raynes wete.
Come forth now with thin eyghen columbine.
How fairer bèn thy brestes than is the wyne.
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute:
Com forth, my swete spouse, out of doute,
Thou hast me wounded in myn hert, o wyf;
No spot in the knew I in al my lif.
Com forth, and let us take oure desport,
I ches the for my wyf and my comfort.'
Such olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damyan a signe made sche,
That he schuld go biforn with his cliket.
This Damyan than hath opened the wiket,
And in he stert, and that in such manere,
That no wight it mighte see nor heere,

[1] This phraseology is taken from the Song of Solomon.

And stille he seet under a bussch. Anoon
This January, as blynd as is a stoon,
With Mayus in his hond, and no wight mo,
Into this freische gardyn is ago,
And clappid to the wiket sodeinly.
'Now, wyf,' quod he, 'her nys but ye and I,
Thou art the creature that I best love;
For by that Lord that sit in heven above,
Lever ich had to dyen on a knyf,
Than the offende, deere trewe wyf.
For Goddes sake, thenk how I the chees,
Nought for no coveytise douteles,
But oonly for the love I had to the.
And though that I be old and may not se,
Beeth trewe to me, and I wol telle yow why;
Thre thinges, certes, schul ye wynne therby;
First, love of Crist, and to your self honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour.
I give it yow, makith chartres as yow leste;
This schal ben doon to morw er sonne reste,
So wisly God my soule bringe to blisse!
I pray yow first in covenaunt ye me kisse.
And though that I be jalous, wyt me nought;[1]
Ye ben so deep emprinted in my thought,
That whan that I considre your beaute,
And therwithal the unlikly eelde of me,
I may nought, certes, though I schulde dye,
Forbere to ben out of your companye
For verray love; this is withouten doute:
Now kisse me, wyf, and let us rome aboute.'
This freissche May, whan sche his wordes herde,
Benignely to January answerde,
But first and forward sche bigan to wepe:
'I have,' quod sche, 'a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wifhod thilke tendre flour,

[1] Do not impute it to me.

Which thàt I have ensured in your hond,
Whan that the prest to yow my body bond;
Wherfor I wil answer in this manere,
With the leve of yow, myn owen lord, so deere.
I pray to God that never dawe the day,
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
If ever I do unto my kyn that schame,
Or elles I empaire so my name,
That I be fals; and if I do that lak,
Doth strepe me, and put me in a sak,
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche;
I am a gentil womman, and no wenche.
Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And wommen han reproef of yow ever newe.
Ye have noon other countenaunce, I leve,
But speke to us as of untrust and repreve.'
And with that word sche saugh wher Damyan
Sat in the buissh, and coughen sche bigan;
And with hir fyngres signes made sche,
That Damyan schuld clymb upon a tre,
That charged was with fruyt, and up he went;
For verrayly he knew al hir entent,
And every signe that sche couthe make,
Wel bet than January hir oughne make.
For in a letter sche had told him al
Of this matier, how he worche schal.
And thus I lete him sitte in the pirie,
And January and May romynge mirye.
Bright was the day, and bliew the firmament;
Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun i-sent
To gladèn every flour with his warmnesse;
He was that tyme in Gemines, as I gesse,
But litel fro his declinacioun
Of Canker, Joves exaltacioun.
And so bifel that brighte moryen tyde,
That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
Pluto, that is the kyng of fayerye,
And many a lady in his compaignie

Folwyng his wif, the queene Preserpina,[1]
Whiche that he ravesched out of Ethna,
Whil that sche gadred floures in the mede,
(In Claudian[2] ye may the story rede,
How in his grisly carte he hir fette);
This king of fayry than adoun him sette
Upon a bench of turves freissh and greene,
And right anoon thus sayd he to his queene:
'My wyf,' quod he, 'ther may no wight say nay,
Thexperiens so preveth every day,
The tresoun which that womman doth to man.
Ten hundrid thousand stories tellen I can
Notable of your untrouth and brutelnesse.
O Salamon, wys and richest of richesse,
Fulfild of sapiens, and of worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and resoun can.
Thus praysith he yit the bounte of man;
Among a thousand men yit fond I oon,
But of alle wommen found I never noon.[3]
Thus saith the king, that knoweth your wikkednesse;
That Jhesus, *filius* Sirac,[4] as I gesse,
Ne spekith of yow but selde reverence.
A wild fuyr and corrupt pestilence
So falle upon your bodies yit to night!
Ne see ye not this honurable knight?
Bycause, allas! that he is blynd and old,
His owne man schal make him cokewold;

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[1] Harl. MS. reads:—

. . . . 'Proserpine
Ech after other as right as a lyne.'

[2] Cl. Claudianus was an Egyptian by birth, and wrote in the reign of Theodosius and his sons, Arcadius and Honorius. The work here alluded to is his poem, *De Raptu Proserpinæ*. He has also written *De Bello Getico*, and many epistles and shorter pieces. Coleridge says that he is 'properly the first of the moderns, or at least the transitional link between the classic and the gothic modes of thought.'—*Table Talk*.

[3] Eccles. vii. 28.

[4] Jesus, the son of Sirach, the writer of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus.

Loo, wher he sitt, the lecchour, in the tre!
Now wol I graunten, of my majeste,
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he schal have agein his eyghen sight,
Whan that his wyf wol do him vilonye;
Than schal he knowe al her harlotrye,
Bothe in reproef of her and other mo.'
'Ye schal?' quod Preserpine, 'and wol ye so?
Now by my modres Ceres[1] soule I swere,
That I schal give hir suffisaunt answere,
And alle wommen after for hir sake;
That though thay be in any gult i-take,
With face bold thay schul hemself excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolde hem accuse.
For lak of answer, noon of hem schal dyen.
Al had ye seyn a thing with bothe your yen,[2]
Yit schul we wymmen visage it hardily,
And wepe and swere and chide subtilly,
That ye schul ben as lewed as ben geos;
What rekkith me of your auctoritees?
I wot wel that this Jew, this Salamon,
Fond of us wommen fooles many oon;
But though he ne fond no good womman,
Yit hath ther founde many another man
Wommen ful trewe, ful good, and vertuous;
Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous,
With martirdom thay proved hir constaunce.[3]
The Romayn gestes[4] eek make remembraunce

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[1] Harl. MS., *Sires.*

[2] Harl. MS.—'*Al had a man seyn a thing with bothe his yen.*'

[3] Proserpine here indicates the true source of the respect with which women were treated in the middle ages, to which chivalrous feeling modern civilization owes, in great measure, its superiority over the old. Yet when Lydgate founds the claim of women to our respect upon the fortitude they displayed in the early ages of Christianity, and upon the purity and virtue of their lives, Warton turns him into ridicule for not rather alleging 'their beauty, amiable accomplishments,' &c., by which they 'refine our sensibilities.'

[4] The Roman history generally, rather than the work called the *Gesta Romanorum.*

Of many a veraay trewe wyf also.
But, sire, be nought wrath, al be it so,
Though that he sayd he fond no good womman,
I pray yow tak the sentens of the man;
He mente thus, that in sovereign bounte
Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinite.
Ey, for verrey God that nys but oon,
What make ye so moche of Salamon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he were riche and glorious?
So made he eek a temple of fals godis,
How might he do a thing that more forbod is?
Parde, als fair as ye his name emplastre,
He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
And in his eelde he verray God forsook;
And if that God ne hadde (as saith the book)
I-spared him for his fadres sake,[1] he scholde
Have lost his regne rather than he wolde.
I sette right nought of the vilonye,
That ye of wommen write, a boterflie;
I am a womman, needes most I speke,
Or elles swelle tyl myn herte breke.
For syn he sayd that we ben jangleresses,
As ever hool I moote brouke my tresses,[2]
I schal not spare for no curtesye
To speke him harm, that wold us vilonye.'
'Dame,' quod this Pluto, 'be no lenger wroth,
I give it up: but sith I swore myn oth,
That I wil graunte him his sight agein,
My word schal stonde, I warne yow certeyn;
I am a kyng, it sit me nought to lye.'
'And I,' quod sche, 'am queen of faierie.
Hir answer schal sche have, I undertake;
Let us no mo wordes herof make.

[1] 1 Kings xi. 12.

[2] The sea goddesses in the classics, and the mermaids and other fairies in the popular mythology, are represented as generally seen combing their hair. Hence, perhaps, Proserpine's oath.

Forsoth I wol no lenger yow contrarie.'
Now let us turne agayn to Januarye,
That in this gardyn with this faire May
Syngeth, ful merier than the papinjay,
'Yow love I best, and schal, and other noon.'
So long about the aleys is he goon,
Til he was come agaynes thilke pirie.
Wher as this Damyan sittith ful mirye
On heigh, among the freische levyes greene.
This freissche May, that is so bright and scheene,
Gan for to syke, and sayd, 'Allas my syde!
Now, sir,' quod sche, 'for aught that may bityde,
I most han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so sore longith me
To eten of the smale peris greene;
Help for hir love that is of heven queene!
I telle yow wel a womman in my plyt[1]
May have to fruyt so gret an appetyt
That sche may deyen, but sche it have.'
'Allas!' quod he, 'that I nad heer a knave
That couthe climbe, allas! allas!' quod he,
'For I am blynd.' 'Ye, sire, no fors,' quod sche;
'But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,
The piry inwith your armes for to take,
(For wel I woot that ye mystruste me)
Than schold I clymbe wel y-nough,' quod sche,
'So I my foot might set upon your bak.'
'Certes,' quod he, 'theron schal be no lak,
Might I yow helpe with myn herte blood.'
He stoupith doun, and on his bak sche stood,
And caught hir by a twist,[2] and up sche goth.
(Ladys, I pray yow that ye be not wroth,
I can not glose, I am a rude man:)
And sodeinly anoon this Damyan

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[1] An allusion to the well-known vulgar error about the longings of pregnant women.

[2] A twisted bough.

Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.[1]
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To January he gaf agayn his sight,
[2]And made him see as wel as ever he might.
And whan he thus had caught his sight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fayn;
But on his wyf his thought was evermo.
Up to the tree he kest his eyghen tuo,
And seigh that Damyan his wyf had dressid
In which maner it may not ben expressid,
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.
And up he gaf a roryng and a cry,
As doth the moder whan the child schal dye;
'Out! help! allas! harrow!' he gan to crie;
'O stronge lady stoure, what dos thow?'
And sche answerith: 'Sire, what eylith yow?
Have paciens and resoun in your mynde,
I have yow holpen on bothe your eyen blynde.
Up peril of my soule, I schal not lyen,
As me was taught to hele with your yen,
Was nothing bet for to make yow see,
Than stroggle with a man upon a tree;
God woot, I dede it in ful good entent.'
'Stroggle!' quod he, 'ye, algat in it went.
God give yow bothe on schames deth to dyen!
He swyved the; I saugh it with myn yen;
And elles be I honged by the hals.'
'Than is,' quod sche, 'my medicine fals.
For certeynly, if that ye mighten see,
Ye wold not say tho wordes unto me.
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfyt sight.'
'I se,' quod he, 'as wel as ever I might,

[1] Tyrwhitt remarks that after this verse, the printed editions (except Caxton 2, and Pynson 1, 2) have eight others of the lowest and most superfluous ribaldry. Both he and Mr. Wright reject them, together with some others of the same character that occur a little farther on, as not being found in any MS. of authority.

[2] These two lines, not being in the Harl. MS., are given from Tyrwhitt.

(Thankid be God) with bothe myn yen tuo,
And by my trouth me thought he did the so.'
'Ye mase, mase, goode sir,' quod sche;
'This thank have I for I have maad yow see;
Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever I was so kynde.'
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'let al passe out of mynde;
Com doun, my leef, and if I have myssayd,
God help me so, as I am evel appayd.
But by my faders soule, I wende have seyn,
How that this Damyan had by the leyn,
And that thy smok had layn upon thy brest.'
'Ye, sire,' quod sche, 'ye may wene as yow lest;
But, sire, a man that wakith out of his slep,
He may not sodeynly wel take keep
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfytly,
Til that he be adawed verrayly.
Right so a man, that long hath blynd i-be,
He may not sodeynly so wel i-se,
First whan the sight is newe comen agayn,
As he that hath a day or tuo i-sayn.
Til that your sight y-stablid be a while,
Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.
Beth war, I pray yow, for, by heven king,
Ful many man wenith for to se a thing,
And it is al another than it semeth;
He that mysconceyveth he mysdemeth.'[1]
And with that word sche leep doun fro the tre.
This January who is glad but he?
He kissith hir, and clippith hir ful ofte,
And on hir wombe he strokith hir ful softe;
And to his paleys hom he hath hir lad.
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.
Thus endith her my tale of Januarye,
God blesse us, and his moder seinte Marie!

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[1] He whose senses convey an incorrect idea to his mind, cannot form a correct judgment.

THE SQUYERES PROLOGE.

'EY! Goddes mercy!' sayd our Hoste tho,
'Now such a wyf I pray God keep me fro.
Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees
In wommen ben; for ay as busy as bees
Ben thay us seely men for to desceyve,
And from a soth ever wol thay weyve.
By this Marchaundes tale it proveth wel.
But douteles, as trewe as eny steel
I have a wyf, though that sche pore be;
But of hir tonge a labbyng schrewe is sche;
And yit sche hath an heep of vices mo.
Therof no fors; let alle such thinges go.
But wite ye what? in counseil be it seyd,
Me rewith sore I am unto hir teyd;
And if I scholde reken every vice,
Which that sche hath, i-wis I were to nyce;
And cause why, it schuld reported be
And told to hir of som of this meyne,
(Of whom it needith not for to declare,
Syn wommen connen oute such chaffare);[1]
And eek my witte suffisith nought therto
To tellen al; wherfor my tale is do.'
'Sir Squier, com forth, if that your wille be,
And say us a tale of love,[2] for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as ony man.'
'Nay, sire,' quod he; 'but I wil say as I can
With herty wil, for I wil not rebelle
Against your wille; a tale wil I telle,
Have me excused if that I speke amys;
My wil is good; and thereto my tale is this.'

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[1] Tyrwhitt is at a loss to understand this parenthesis, but it seems to mean, 'Of whose vices I will not speak; for women, of whom there are many in this company, know well how to divulge it.'

[2] In the Harl. MS. the words *of love* are omitted.

THE SQUYERES TALE.

[THIS tale, to which Warton assigns the first place in the collection, is apparently founded upon a story of Arabian origin, ennobled, no doubt, by Chaucer in the process of transplantation. Almost all the incidents and circumstances are found scattered in different Arabian tales, though not combined in any one. It possesses the fascination of one of the *Arabian Nights*, deepened in human interest; the special attributes of Oriental fiction are faithfully preserved in its gorgeous details and fantastical enchantments; and it is coloured throughout by those peculiar characteristics of Eastern literature which may be traced to the genius and religion of the people. Brilliancy of fancy the Easterns certainly possess, but it is the fancy of the opium-eater; their highest aspirations never contemplate any enjoyment beyond that of sensuality or power. Supernatural influences enter largely into the machinery of Eastern romance; but they assume the form of magic, and are attached to material charms, as in the brazen horse, the mirror and the ring of this tale. The Oriental fabulists sympathise only with success; the dignity of suffering virtue finds no responsive chord in their hearts, which are of the earth, earthy. The main differences between the literatures of the East and West may be partially estimated by a comparison between this unfinished tale and the story of *Constance*, or *The Romance of the Saint Graal*. The latter are impressed with a feeling of responsibility, and of the immutability of the law of right and wrong, which gives an elevation even to their most extravagant flights. Such moral elevation is sought for in vain in Eastern romance. Apart, however, from the radical defects of this style of fiction, its want of aim and mere sensuousness, *The Squyeres Tale* displays pre-eminently Chaucer's marvellous powers of *picture-writing*. The magnificent festivities of a feudal castle, heightened by some glittering touches borrowed from a Saracenic palace, are

produced before the mind's eye with startling reality and gorgeous effect. Tyrwhitt and Warton both follow Milton in thinking that Chaucer left this tale 'half-told;' but, from the following lines in *The Temple of Glass*, by Hawes, a poet of the reign of Henry VII., it would appear that in his time a continuation was in existence, whether by Chaucer or one of his imitators there are no means of ascertaining. The poet describes the ornaments of the Temple:—

> And uppermore men depeinten might see
> Howe, with her ring, goodlie Canace,
> Of every foule the leden and the song'
> Could understand, as she them walked among.
> And how her brother *so often holpen was*
> In his mischefe, by the steed of brass.

In *The Squyeres Tale*, as it at present exists, we have no account of Canace's brother's 'mischiefes,' nor of the assistance he received from the enchanted steed. Tyrwhitt gives the following sketch of what he supposes to be the intended sequel of the story, in which he differs essentially from Spenser's continuation. 'The outline, therefore, of the unfinished part of this tale, according to my idea, is nearly this; the conclusion of the story of *The Faucon*,

> By mediation of Camballus,

with the help of *the ring;* the conquests of Cambuscan; the winning of Theodora by *Algarsif*, with the assistance of *the horse of brass;* and the marriage of Canace to *some knight*, who was first obliged to fight for her with her *two brethren;* a method of courtship very consonant to the spirit of ancient chivalry.']

AT Sarray, in the lond of Tartary,
Ther dwelled a kyng that werryed Russy,
Thurgh which ther deyed many a doughty man;
This nobil kyng was cleped Cambynskan,[1]
Which in his tyme was of so gret renoun,
That ther nas nowher in no regioun

[1] This name, like Zengis Khan, appears to include the monarch's title. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. differ from the ordinary reading, *Cambuskan*, which Milton followed in *Il Penseroso*.

So excellent a lord in alle thing;
Him lakked nought that longed to a kyng.
As of the secte of which that he was born,
He kept his lawe to which he was sworn;[1]
And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
And pitous and just, and alway y-liche,
Soth of his word, benign and honurable;
Of his corage as eny centre stable;
Yong, freisch, and strong, in armes desirous,
As eny bachiler of al his hous.
A fair person he was, and fortunat,
And kepte so wel his real astat,
That ther was nowher such a ryal man.
This noble kyng, this Tartre, this Cambynskan,
Hadde tuo sones by Eltheta his wyf,
Of which the eldest highte Algarsyf,[2]
That other was i-cleped Camballo.
A doughter had this worthi king also,
That yongest was, and highte Canace;
But for to telle yow al hir beaute,
It lith not on my tonge, ne my connyng,
I dar nought undertake so heigh a thing;
Myn Englissh eek is insufficient,
It moste be a rethor excellent
That couth his colours longyng for that art,
If he schold hir discryve in eny part;
I am non such, I mot speke as I can.
And so bifel it, that this Cambynskan
Hath twenty wynter born his dyademe;
As he was wont fro yer to yer, I deme,
He leet the fest of his nativite
Don cryen, thurghout Sarray his cite,
The last Idus of March, after the yeer.
Phebus the sonne was joly and cleer,

[1] He kept the laws of that form of religion to which he was sworn or bound.

[2] The Harl. MS. gives *Algaryf* for *Algarsyf*, and *Samballo* for *Camballo*.

For he was neigh his exaltacioun
In Martes face, and in his mansioun
In Aries, the colerik, the hote signe.
Ful lusty was the wedir and benigne,
For which the foules agein the sonne scheene,
What for the sesoun and for the yonge greene,
Ful lowde song in here affecciouns;
Hem semed have geten hem protecciouns
Agens the swerd of wynter kene and cold.
This Cambynskan, of which I have told,
In royal vesture, sittyng on his deys
With dyadem, ful heigh in his paleys;
And held his fest solempne and so riche,
That in this worlde was there noon it liche.
Of which if I schal tellen al tharray,
Than wold it occupie a someres day;
And eek it needith nought for to devyse
At every cours the ordre and the servyse.
I wol nat tellen of her straunge sewes,
Ne of her swannes,[1] ne here heroun-sewes.
Ek in that lond, as tellen knightes olde,
Ther is som mete that is ful deynte holde,
That in this lond men recch of it but smal;
Ther is no man it may reporten al.
I wel not tarien you, for it is pryme,[2]
And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme,
Unto my purpos I wol have my recours.
That so bifelle after the thridde cours,
Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,
Herkyng his mynstrales her thinges pleye

[1] The swan was formerly a favourite dish. It is still considered a great delicacy in Norfolk, and the fat especially is as much esteemed as that of venison by East Anglian *gourmets*. The old Norwich corporation used to proceed annually down the river in their state barges to Yarmouth, *swan-hopping*—that is, catching and marking the young birds—a custom still followed by the corporation of London. From this custom we derive the tavern sign of the Swan with Two Necks, a corruption of Swan with Two Nicks, the marks made by the Lord Mayor on the swans on the Thames. Herons may now sometimes be seen in the Norwich game-market. [2] See vol. i., p. 218, note 2.

Byforne him atte boord deliciously,[1]
In atte halle dore al sodeynly
Ther com a knight upon a steed of bras,
And in his hond a brod myrour of glas;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ryng,[2]
And by his side a naked swerd hangyng:
And up he rideth to the heyghe bord.[3]
In al the halle ne was ther spoke a word,
For mervayl of this knight; him to byholde
Ful besily they wayten yong and olde.
This straunge knight that cam thus sodeynly,
Al armed sauf his heed ful richely,
Salued the kyng and queen, and lordes alle
By ordre, as they seten into halle,
With so heigh reverens and observaunce,
As wel in speche as in contynaunce,

---

[1] See *ante*, p. 176, note 5.

[2] The ring was a symbol of great significance in the middle ages, and was frequently of large size, and worn on the thumb.

[3] The palaces of the early Norman kings and nobility consisted of one large oblong hall, like our college halls, at one end of which was a raised platform, from which there was a door into a cellar, or buttery, or *spence;* and over that a sleeping apartment for the great lord and his family. The hall was furnished with long tables, and with a 'heyghe bord' on the dais, at which the seigneur dined, and was strewn with rushes, which at night served for a bed for his numerous retainers. This was the type of all the mediæval dwellings; but as refinement advanced, the number of private sleeping apartments would, of course, be increased. See *Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages.* A horseman might easily ride up such a hall, without causing any disarrangement of the furniture, which consisted only of boards on tressels, and a few forms and joint-stools. Thus, in Percy's fine ballad of *King Estmere*:—

'Kynge Estmere he light off his steede,
Up at the fayre hall board,
The frothe that cam from his brydle bitte
Light on King Bremor's beard,'

as he sat at dinner. Thus, also, in the *Life of Alexander*, by Adam Davie, who flourished about the year 1312:—

'To the paleis they gon ride,
And fond this feste in all pruyde;
Forth goth Alesaunder saun fable
Ryght to thee *heygh table.*'

That Gaweyn[1] with his olde curtesye,
They he were come agein out of fayrye,
Ne couthe him nought amende with no word.
And after this, biforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois sayd this message,
After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of sillabil or letter.
And for his tale schulde seme the better,
Accordaunt to his wordes was his cheere,
As techeth art of speche[2] hem that it leere.
Al be it that I can nat sowne his style,
Ne can nat clymben over so heigh a style,[3]
Yit say I this, as to comun entent,
Thus moche amounteth al that ever he ment,
If it so be that I have it in mynde.
He sayd: 'The kyng of Arraby and of Ynde,
My liege lord, on this solempne day
Saluteth you as he best can or may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feste,
By me, that am redy, at al his heste,
This steede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of o day naturel,
(This is to say, in four and twenty houres)
Wher so yow lust, in droughthe or in schoures,
Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte wilneth for to pace,
Withouten wem of you, thurgh foul and fair.[4]
Or if you lust to flee as heigh in thair

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *Ewen*, probably from the scribe having confounded the two heroes Ywaine and Gawaine in the romance of that name; but Gawaine is evidently the person meant, for he is always considered the model of courtesy in the court of Arthur, as in Percy's ballad:—

'Then bespake him Ser Gawaine,
That was ever a gentle knight.'

[2] 'It was the boast of one of their historians that the Norman gentlemen were orators from their cradle.'—MACAULAY, *Hist. Eng.*, vol. i.

[3] This appears to be a pun on the word *style*.

The horse and mirror will remind the reader of the enchanted carpet and perspective glass given to Prince Ahmed by the fairy Pari Banou, in *The Arabian Nights*.

As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
This same steede schal bere you evermore
Withoute harm, til ye be ther yow leste,
(Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste),
And torne agein, with wrything of a pyn.
He that it wrought, he cowthe many a gyn;
He wayted many a constellacioun,
Er he had do this operacioun,
And knew ful many a seal[1] and many a bond.
'This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,
Hath such a mighte, that men may in it see
When ther schal falle eny adversite
Unto your regne, or to your self also,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over al this, if eny lady bright
Hath set hir hert on eny maner wight,
If he be fals, sche schal his tresoun see,
His newe love, and his subtilite,
So openly, that ther schall nothing hyde.
Wherfor ageins this lusty somer tyde
This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,
He hath send to my lady Canacee,
Your excellente doughter that is heere.
'The vertu of this ryng, if ye wol heere,
Is this, that who so lust it for to were
Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,
Ther is no foul that fleeth under the heven,
That sche ne schal understonden his steven,
And know his menyng openly and pleyn,
And answer him in his langage ageyn;

---

[1] Warton says on this line, 'Seal may mean a talismanic sigil used in astrology. Or the hermetic seal used in chemistry. Or connected with *bond*, may signify contracts made with spirits in chemical operations. But all these belong to the Arabian philosophy. See d'Herbelot, *Dict. Orient.*, pp. 810, 1005.' The east was always the land of magic, which was imported into Western Europe by the Crusaders. They had unhappily forgotten the example of the early Christians, who, on their conversion, burned their magical books. Acts xix. 19.

And every gras that groweth upon roote
Sche schal eek know, to whom it wol do boote,
Al be his woundes never so deep and wyde.
'This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side,
Such vertu hath, that what man that it smyte,
Thurghout his armur it wol kerve and byte,
Were it as thikke as a braunched ook;
And what man is i-wounded with the strook
Schal never be hool, til that you lust of grace
To strok him with the plat in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as moche to seyn,
Ye moote with the platte swerd agein
Stroke him in the wound, and it wol close.
This is the verray soth withouten glose,
It failleth nought, whil it is in your hold.'
And whan this knight thus had his tale told,
He rit out of the halle, and doun he light.
His steede, which that schon as sonne bright,
Stant in the court as stille as eny stoon.
This knight is to his chambre lad anoon,
And is unarmed, and to mete i-sett.
This presentz ben ful richely i-fett,
This is to sayn, the swerd and the myrrour,
And born anon unto the highe tour,
With certein officers ordeynd therfore;
And unto Canace the ryng is bore
Solempnely, ther sche syt atte table;
But sikerly, withouten eny fable,
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,
It stant, as it were to the ground i-glewed;
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve
For noon engyn of wyndas[1] or polyve;
And cause why, for they can nought the craft,
And therfor in the place thei have it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere
To voyden him, as ye schul after heere.

[1] Harl. MS., *wyndyng*.

Greet was the pres that swarmed to and fro
To gauren on this hors that stondeth so;
For it so high[1] was, and so brod and long,
So wel proporcioned to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lumbardye;[2]
Therto so horsly, and so quyk of ye,
As it[3] a gentil Poyleys courser were;
For certes, fro his tayl unto his eere
Nature ne art ne couthe him nought amende
In no degre, as al the poepel wende.
But evermore her moste wonder was,
How that he couthe goon, and was of bras;
It was of fayry, as the poeple semed.
Diverse peple diversly they demed;
As many hedes, as many wittes been.
They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,
And made skiles after her fantasies,
Rehersyng of the olde poetries,
And seyden it was i-like the Pegase,[4]
The hors that hadde wynges for to fle;
Or elles it was the Grekissch hors Synon,[5]
That broughte Troye to destruccioun,
As men may in the olde gestes rede.
'Myn hert,' quod oon, 'is evermore in drede,
I trow som men of armes ben therinne,
That schapen hem this cite for to wynne;
It were good that such thing were knowe.'
Another rowned to his felaw lowe,
And sayde: 'It lyth, for it is rather lik
An apparence maad by som magik,

[1] Harl. MS., *wyd*.

[2] The rich plains of Lombardy produced a breed of strong heavy horses, like our Lincolnshire dray-horse, well suited to carry a knight in heavy armour. The steed of brass combined the bone and power of this heavy war-horse with the spirit and breeding of a 'gentil Poyleys courser,' that is, a thorough-bred horse of *Apulia*, called in French *Poille*.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *tf.* which does not make sense. *It* is from Tyrwhitt.

[4] Margin of Harl. MS., *equus pegaseus*.

[5] The horse of the Greek Sinon. See *Æneid*.

As jogelours[1] pleyen at this festes grete.'
Of sondry thoughtes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demeth comunly
Of thinges that ben maad more subtily
Than they can in her lewednes comprehende,
They deemen gladly to the badder ende.
And som of hem wondred on the mirrour,
That born was up into the maister tour,[2]
How men might in it suche thinges se.
Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be
Naturelly by composicioums
Of angels,[3] and of heigh reflexioums;
And sayde that in Rome[4] was such oon.
They specke of Alhazen[5] and Vitilyon,
And Aristotle, that writen in her lyves
Of queynte myrrours and prospectyves,
As knowen they that han her bokes herd.
And other folk have wondred on the swerd,
That wolde passe thorughout every thing;
And fel in speche of Telophus the kyng,
And of Achilles for his queynte spere,
For he couthe with it bothe hele and dere,[6]
Right in such wise as men may with the swerd,
Of which right now ye have your selven herd.

---

[1] See *ante*, p. 95, note 5.

[2] The chief tower, called the donjon.

[3] Angles.

[4] An allusion to a magical image said to have been placed by the enchanter Virgil in the middle of Rome, which communicated to the Emperor Titus all the secret offences committed every day in the city. *Gesta Roman.*, c. lvii. The poet was invested with the character of a necromancer, or wizard, because the heathen mythology enters so largely into his writings.

[5] Harl. MS. for *Alhazen* reads *Alcoyt*. *Alhazeni et Vitellionis opera* are extant, printed at Basil in 1572. The first is supposed by his editor to have lived about A.D. 1100, and the second in A.D. 1270.—T.

[6] Telephus, the son of Hercules and Auge, was wounded by Achilles with his spear, and healed by the application of some rust from the same weapon. Petronius, in his epigram *De Telepho*, exactly describes the qualities of Cambynskan's magic sword:—

'Unde datum est vulnus, contigit inde salus.'

They speeken of sondry hardyng of metal,
And speken of medicines therwithal,
And how and whan it schulde harded be,
Which is unknowe algat unto me.
Tho speeken they of Canacees ryng,
And seyden alle, that such a wonder thing
Of craft of rynges herd they never noon,
Sauf that he Moyses and kyng Salamon[1]
Hadden a name of connyng in such art.
Thus seyen the peple, and drawen hem apart.[2]
But natheles som seiden that it wâs
Wonder thing to make of ferne aisschen glas,[3]
And yit is glas nought like aisschen of ferne,
But for they han i-knowen it so ferne;
Therfor cesseth her janglyng and her wonder.
As sore wondred som of cause of thonder,
On ebbe and flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist.
Thus janglen they, and demen and devyse,
Til that the kyng gan fro his bord arise.
Phebus hath left the angel merydyonal,
And yit ascendyng was a best roial,
The gentil Lyoun, with his Aldryan,[4]
Whan that this gentil kyng, this Cambynskan,
Ros fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye;
Biforn him goth ful lowde menstralcye,

[1] It is easily seen how Moses and Solomon came to be ranked among magicians. Moses was 'learned in all the learning of the Egyptians;' but the Egyptian learning, like all Eastern philosophies, if they can be dignified by the name, was a form of magic and soothsaying. Exodus, *passim*. Solomon, in his old age, served the false gods Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech, whose worship consisted in a most impure and cruel necromancy.

[2] Harl MS.:—

'*The people on every part.*'

[3] The people said, This miraculous sword, glass, and ring, are not more wonderful than the manufacture of glass, which is made of the ashes of fern, and other plants, and sand, and yet is like none of its component parts; nor would any one have guessed of what it is composed, had they not been so far previously informed.

[4] Harl. MS., *Adryan*.

Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,[1]
Ther as ther were divers instrumentz,
That is y-like an heven for to heere.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere;
For in the fissch her lady sat ful heyghe,[2]
And loketh on hem with a frendly eyghe.
This noble kyng is set upon his trone;
This straunge knight is fet to him ful sone,
And in the daunce he gan with Canace.
Her is the revel and the jolyte,
That is not able a dul man to devyse;
He most have knowe love and his servise,
And ben a festly man, as freisch as May,
That schulde you devyse such array.
Who couthe telle you the forme of daunce
So uncouth, and so freische countinaunce,
Such subtil lokyng of dissimilynges,
For drede of jalous folk apparceyvynges?
No man but Launcolet,[3] and he is deed.
Therfore I passe over al this lustyheed,
I say no more, but in this jolynesse
I lete hem, til men to soper hem dresse.
The styward byt the spices for to hye
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;
Thes usschers and thes squyers ben agon,
The spices and the wyn is come anoon;
They eet and drank, and whan this had an ende,
Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wende;

---

1 *Chambre de paremens* is translated by Cotgrave the presence-chamber, and *lit de paremens*, a bed of state. *Paremens* originally signified all sorts of ornamental furniture or clothes, from *parer*, to adorn. See vol. i., p. 169, and *Leg. of G. W. Dido*, verse 181:—

'To dauncing chambres, ful of parementes,
Of riche beddes and of pavementes,
This Eneas is ledde after the mete.'

The Italians have the same expression, *Ist. di Conc. Trident.*, lib. iii.:—'Il Pontefice, ritornato alla *camera de' paramenti* co' Cardinali.'—T.

2 See *ante*, p. 67, note *z*.

3 Launcelot intrigued with Queen Guenever, and was therefore skilled in such arts.

The servise doon, they soupen al by day.[1]
What needeth you to rehersen her array?
Ech man wot wel, that a kynges feste
Hath plente, to the lest and to the meste,
And deyntees mo than ben in my knowyng.
At after souper goth this noble kyng
To see this hors of bras, with al his route
Of lordes and of ladyes him aboute.
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,
That seth this grete siege of Troye was,
Ther as men wondrid on an hors also,
Ne was ther such a wondryng as was tho.
But fynally the kyng asked the knight
The vertu of this courser, and the might,
And prayd him tellen of his governaunce.
The hors anoon gan for to trippe and daunce,
Whan that the knight leyd hand upon his rayne,
And sayde, 'Sir, ther is nomore to sayne,
But whan you lust to ryde any where,
Ye moote trille a pyn, stant in his ere,
Which I schal telle you betwen us two,
Ye moste nempne him to what place also,
Or what countre you luste for to ryde.
And whan ye come ther you lust abyde,
Bid him descende, and trille another pynne,
(For therin lith theffet of al the gynne)
And he wol doun descend and do your wille,
And in that place he wol abyde stille;
Though al the world had the contrary swore,
He schal nat thennes be i-throwe ne bore.
Or if you lust to bid him thennes goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wol vanyssh anoon
Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come agein, be it by day or night,
Whan that you lust to clepen him agayn
In such a gyse, as I schal yow sayn

[1] See *ante*, p. 132, note 3.

Betwixe you and me, and therfor soone,
Byd whan you lust, ther nys nomor to donne.'
Enformed whan the kyng was of the knight,
And had conceyved in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of al this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty kyng
Repeyryng to his revel, as biforn,
The bridel is unto the tour i-born,
And kept among his jewels leef and deere;
The hors vanyscht, I not in what manere,
Out of her sight, ye get nomore of me;
But thus I lete him in his jolite
This Cambinskan his lordes festeyng,
Til wel neigh the day bigan to spryng.

INCIPIT SECUNDA PARS.

THE norice of digestioun, the sleep,
Gan to hem[1] wynk, and bad of him take keep,
That mirthe and labour wol have his rest;[2]
And with a galpyng[3] mouth hem alle he keste,
And sayd, that it was tyme to lye doun,
For blood was in his dominacioun:
'Cherischeth blood, natures frend,' quod he.
They thankyn him galpyng, by two and thre;
And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
As sleep hem bad, they took it for the best.

---

[1] *Hem* has been substituted from Tyrwhitt, as giving a better sense than *him*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

[2] Of this line there are several readings; that given in the text from the Harl. MS. is rejected by Mr. Wright for *moche mete and labour*, which seems neither to give so good a sense, nor to agree with the metre. The meaning appears obvious, though Tyrwhitt thinks otherwise. What can be more to the purpose than to say that mirth and labour equally require rest?

[3] There is something excessively grotesque and highly characteristic of mediæval taste in the personification of Sleep kissing the revellers with yawning mouth, and setting them all yawning; and their thanking him in yawns 'by one, by two, by three'—all gradually dropping in, and joining in a grand yawning chorus.

Here dremes schul not now be told for me;
Ful were here heedes of fumosite,
That causeth drem. of which ther is no charge.
They slepen til that[1] it was prime large,[2]
The moste part, but it were Canace;
Sche was ful mesurable,[3] as wommen be.
For of hir fader had sche take hir leve
To go to reste, soon after it was eve;
Hir luste not appalled for to be,
Ne on the morwe unfestly for to se;
And kept hir firste sleep, and then awook.
For such a joye sche in hir herte took,
Bothe of hir queynte ryng, and hir myrrour,
That twenty tyme chaunged hire colour;
And in hire sleep, right for the impressioun
Of hir myrrour, sche had a visioun.
Wherfor, or that the sonne up gan glyde,
Sche cleped upon hir maistresse beside,
And sayde, that hire luste for to ryse.
These olde wommen, that ben gladly wyse,
As is here maystresse,[4] answered her anoon,
And sayd, 'Madame, whider wold ye goon
Thus erly? for folk ben alle in reste.'
'I wil,' quod sche, 'aryse, for me leste
No lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute.'
Her maistres clepeth wommen a gret route,
And up they risen, a ten other a twelve.
Up ryseth fresshe Canace hir selve,
As rody and bright, as is the yonge sonne
That in the ram is ten degrees i-ronne;
No heiher was he, whan sche redy was;
And forth sche walked esily a pas,
Arayed after the lusty sesoun soote
Lightly for to play, and walke on foote,

---

[1] *That* has been added from Tyrwhitt for the sake of the metre.

[2] See vol. i., p. 218, note 2. *Prime large* appears to mean till the hour of prime was nearly spent, and the hour of tierce was about to begin.

[3] Moderate in eating and sleeping.

[4] Her governess.

Nought but with fyve or six of hir meyne;
And in a trench[1] fer in the park goth sche.
The vapour, which that of the erthe glod,
Maketh the sonne seme rody and brod;
But natheles, it was so fair a sight,
That it made alle here hertes for to light,
What for the sesoun, what for the mornyng
And for the foules that sche herde syng.
For right anoon sche wiste what they ment
Right by here song, and knew al here entent.
The knotte,[2] why that every tale is told,
If that it be taryed til lust be cold
Of hem that han it after herkned yore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the more,
For fulsomnes of the prolixite;
And by this same resoun thinketh me
I schulde to the knotte condescende,
And make of hir walkynge sone an ende.
Amyddes a tree for druye as whit as chalk,[3]
As Canace was pleyyng in hir walk,
There sat a faukoun over hir heed ful hye,
That with a pitous vois bigan to crye,
That al the woode resowned of hire cry,
And beten hadde sche hir self so pitously[4]
With bothe hir wynges, to the reede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as sche stood.
And ever in oon sche cried and sche schryght,
And with hir bek hir selve so sche pight,
That ther nys tigre non ne cruel beste,
That dwelleth eyther in wood, or in foreste,
That nold han wept, if that he wepen cowde,
For sorw of hir, sche schright alway so lowde.

---

[1] *Trench* appears to mean *dell*.

[2] The complication of circumstances which forms the interest of the story. The expression is Horace's:—'Dignus vindice *nodus*.'—*Epist. ad Pisones*.

[3] As white as chalk for very dryness.—See vol. i., p. 189, note 2.

[4] This line is an Alexandrine, a very unusual occurrence in Chaucer.

For ther nas never yit no man on lyve,
If that he couthe a faukoun wel discrive,
That herd of such another of fairnesse
As wel of plumage, as of gentillesse
Of schap, of al that might i-rekened be.
A faukoun peregryn[1] than semed sche
Of fremde lond; and ever as sche stood,
Sche swowned now and now for lak of blood,
Til wel neigh is sche fallen fro the tre.
This faire kynges doughter, Canace,
That on hir fynger bar the queynte ryng,
Thurgh which sche understood wel every thing
That eny foul may in his lydne[2] sayn,
And couthe answer him in his lydne agayn,
Hath understonde what this faukoun seyde,
And wel neigh almost for the rewthe sche deyde.
And to the tree sche goth ful hastily,
And on this faukoun loketh pitously,
And held hir lappe abrod, for wel sche wist
The faukoun moste falle fro the twist,
Whan that sche swowned next, for lak of blood.
A long while to wayten hir sche stood,
Til atte last sche spak in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye schul after heere.
'What is the cause, if it be for to telle,
That ye ben in that furyalle peyne of helle?'

---

[1] Tyrwhitt quotes from an old treatise of falconry. 'La seconde lignie est faucons, que hom apele *pelerins*, par ce que nus ne trove son ni. Ains est pris autresi come en *pelerinage*, et est mult legiers a norrir, et mult cortois, et vaillans, et de bone maniere.' This agrees with Chaucer's description of the falcon as of *fremde* or foreign *lond*. From being *mult courtois* it was called the falcon gentil, or gentle. Thus in *The Assembly of Foules*:—

'The gentle faucon, that with his fect distreineth
The king's hand,' &c.

[2] *Leden* or *lidne*—language, Saxon; a corruption of the word *Latin*. Dante uses *Latin* in the same sense. Canz. i.:—

'E cantine gli augelli
Ciascuno in suo *latino*.'

Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
'Is this for sorwe of deth, or elles love?
For as I trowe, this ben causes tuo
That causen most a gentil herte wo.
Of other harm it needeth nought to speke,
For ye your self upon your self awreke;
Which preveth wel, that either ire or drede
Mote ben enchesoun of your cruel dede,
Sith that I see noon other wight you chace.
For love of God, so doth your selve grace.
Or what may ben your helpe? for west ner est
Ne saugh I never er now no bryd ne beste,
That ferde with him self so pitously.
Ye sle me with your sorwe so verrily,
I have of you so gret compassioun.
For Goddes love, come fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kynges doughter trewe,
If that I verrayly the cause knewe
Of your disese, if it lay in my might,
I wold amenden it, or that it wer night,[1]
Als wisly help me grete God of kynde.
And herbes schal I right y-nowe fynde,
To helen with your hurtes hastyly.'
Tho schright this faukoun more pitously
Than ever sche did, and fil to ground anoon,
And lay aswowne, deed as eny stoon,
Til Canace hath in hir lap y-take,
Unto that tyme sche gan of swowne slake;
And after that sche gan of swown abreyde,
Right in hir haukes lydne thus sche sayde.
'That pite renneth sone in gentil hert
(Felyng his similitude in peynes smerte)
Is proved alday, as men may see,
As wel by werk as by auctorite;[2]

[1] Harl. MS., *if that I might.*

[2] As well by example as by this proverb.

For gentil herte kepeth gentillesse.
I see wel, that ye have on my distresse
Compassioun, my faire Canace,
Of verray wommanly benignite,
That nature in your principles hath set.
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obeye unto your herte fre,
And for to make othere war by me,
As by the whelp chastised is the lyoun;
And for that cause and that conclusioun,
Whiles that I have a leyser and a space,
Myn harm I wil confessen er I pace.'
And whil sche ever of hir sorwe tolde,
That other wept, as sche to water wolde,
Til that the faucoun bad hir to be stille,
And with a sighhe thus sche sayd hir tille.
'Ther I was bred, (allas that ilke day!)
And fostred in a roch of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing eyled me,
I ne wiste not what was adversite,
Til I couthe flee ful heigh under the sky.
Tho dwelled a tercelet[1] me faste by,
That semed welle of alle gentillesse;
Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse,
It was i-wrapped under humble cheere,
And under heewe of trouthe in such manere,
Under plesaunce, and under besy peyne,
That no wight wende that he couthe feyne,
So deep in greyn he deyed his colours.
Right as a serpent hut him under floures
Til he may see his tyme for to byte:
Right so this god of loves ypocrite[2]

[1] The tercelet is the male of the peregrine falcon, and, unlike most other males, is smaller and less courageous than the female. See *Romeo and Juliet*, Act ii. sc. 2:—

'O for a falconer's voice
To lure this *tassel-gentle* back again.'

[2] Harl. MS.—'*This god'of love, this ypocryte.*' The meaning is, 'this hypocritical worshipper of the god of love.'

Doth so his sermonys and his observaunce,
Under subtil colour and aqueyntaunce,
That sowneth unto gentilesse of love.
As in a tombe is al the faire above,
And under is the corps,[1] whiche that ye wot;
Such was this ipocrite, bothe cold and hot,
And in this wise he served his entent,
That, sauf the feend, noon wiste what he ment.
Til he so long had weped and compleyned,
And many a yeer his service to me feyned,
Til that myn hert, to pitous and to nyce,
Al innocent of his crouned malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his sewerte,
Graunted him love, on this condicioun,
That evermo myn honour and my renoun
Were saved, both pryvy and apert;
That is to sayn, that, after his desert,
I gaf him al myn hert and al my thought,
(God woot, and he, that other weye nought)[2]
And took his hert in chaunge of myn for ay.
But soth is sayd, go sithens many a day,
A trew wight and a theef thenketh nought oon.
And when he saugh the thyng so fer i-goon,
That I had graunted him fully my love,
In such a wyse as I have sayd above,
And geven him my trewe hert as fre
As he swor that he gaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fil on his knees with so gret devoutenesse,
With so high reverence, as by his chere,
So lyk a gentil lover of manere,
So ravysched, as it semede, for joye,
That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,

---

[1] Matt. xxiii. 27.

[2] God and he know that I loved him in no other way.

Jason? certes, ne noon other man,
Sith Lameth[1] was, that altherfirst bygan
To loven two, as writen folk biforn,
Ne never sith the firste man was born,
Ne couthe man by twenty thousand part
Contrefete the sophemes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbokel his galoche,
Ther doublenes of feynyng schold approche,
Ne so couthe thankyn a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to see
To eny womman, were sche never so wys;
So peynteth he and kembeth[2] poynt devys,
As wel his wordes, as his continaunce.
And I so loved him for his obeisaunce,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that eny thing him smerte,
Al were it never so litel, and I it wist,
Me thought I felte deth at myn hert twist.
And schortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
That my wil was his willes instrument;
This is to say, my wille obeied his wille
In alle thing, as fer as resoun fille,
Kepyng the boundes of my worschip ever;
Ne never had I thing so leef, ne lever,
As him, God woot, ne never schal nomo.
This laste lenger than a yeer or two,
That I supposed of him nought but good.
But fynally, atte laste thus it stood,
That fortune wolde that he moste twynne
Out of the place which that I was inne.
Wher me was wo, it is no questioun;
I can nat make of it descripcioun.
For o thing dar I telle boldely,
I know what is the peyne of deth, therby,

[1] Lamech was the first who had two wives.—Gen. iv.

[2] *Combeth.* The sense in the text is settles, or arranges, his poynt devys with care and precision.

Which harm I felt, for he ne mighte byleve.[1]
So on a day of me he took his leve,
So sorwful eek, that I went verrayly,
That he had feled als moche harm as I,
Whan that I herd him speke, and saugh his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,
And eek that he schulde repeire ageyn
Withinne a litel while, soth to seyn,
And resoun wold eek that he moste go
For his honour, as oft it happeth so.[2]
Than I made vertu of necessite,
And took it wel, sethens it moste be.
As I best might, I had fro him my sorwe,
And took him by the hand, seint Johan to borwe,[3]
And sayde thus: 'Lo, I am youres al,
Beth such as I have be to you and schal.'
What he answerd, it needeth nat to reherse:
Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?
Whan he hath al wel sayd, than hath he doon.
Therfor bihoveth him a ful long spoon,
That schal ete with a feend;[4] thus herd I say.
So atte last he moste forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he cam ther him leste.
Whan it cam him to purpos for to reste,
I trow he hadde thilke text[5] in mynde,
That alle thing repeyryng to his kynde

[1] I can form some conception of the pain of death from what I then suffered. I felt such distress as he could not believe.

[2] Harl. MS. omits *as oft it happeth so*. The words are supplied from Tyrwhitt.

[3] With the help of St. John, a common form of invocation.

[4] This expressive proverb was common in the middle ages. Mr. Wright points out two places in Shakespeare where it occurs. *Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. sc. 3, 'Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil;' and *Tempest*, Act ii. sc. 2, Stephano says, 'Mercy! mercy! this is a devil, and no monster: I will leave him; I have no long spoon.'

[5] This is taken from Boethius, lib. iii. met. 2, thus translated by Chaucer:—'All thynges seken ayen to hir propre course, and all thynges rejoysen on hir retourninge agayne to hir nature.' The comparison of the bird is from the same source.

Gladeth himself; thus seyn men, as I gesse;
Men loven of kynde newefangilnesse,
As briddes doon, that men in cage feede.
For theigh thou night and day take of hem heede,
And straw her cage faire and soft as silk,
And geve hem sugre, hony, breed, and mylk,
Yet right anoon as that his dore is uppe,
He with his feet wil sporne doun his cuppe,[1]
And to the wode he wil, and wormes ete;
So newefangel be thei of her mete,
And loven non leveres of propre kinde;
No gentiles of blood ne may hem binde.
So ferde this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentil born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kite[2] fle,
And sodeynly he loved this kite soo,
That al his love is clene fro me goo;
And hath his trouthe falsed in this wise.
Thus hathe the kite my love in hir servise,
And I am lorne withoute remedy.'
And with that worde this faukon gan to cry,
And swowneth eft in Canacees barme.
Gret was the sorwe for that haukes harme,
That Canace and alle hire wommen made;
They nysten howe they myght the faukon glade.
But Canace hom bereth hir in hir lappe,
And softely in plastres gan hir wrappe,
Ther as sche with hir bek hadde hurt hir selve.
Now can nought Canace bot herbes delve
Out of the grounde, and maken salves newe
Of herbes precious and fyne of hewe,

---

[1] A leaf or two have unfortunately been lost from the Harl. MS. after this line, and I am obliged to take the remainder of the tale from Tyrwhitt, collated with the Lansd. MS.—W.

[2] The kite is a cowardly species of hawk, quite unfit for falconry, and was, therefore, the emblem of everything base, in the ages when the love of this sport almost amounted to madness.

To helen with this hauk;[1] fro day to night
Sche doth hir besines, and al hir might.
And by hir beddes heed sche made a mewe,[2]
And covered it with veluettes blewe,[3]
In signe of trewthe that is in womman seene;
And al withoute the mewe is peynted greene,
In whiche were peynted alle this false foules,
As ben this tideves, tercelettes, and owles;
And pies, on hem for to crye and chide,
Right for despite were peynted hem byside.[4]
Thus lete I Canace hir hauk kepyng.
I wil nomore nowe speken of hir rynge,
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn,
How that this faukon gat hir love ageyn
Repentaunt, as the story telleth us,
By mediacioun of Camballus
The kinges sone, of which that I yow tolde;
But hennesforth I wil my proces holde
To speken of aventures, and of batailes,
That yit was never herd so grete mervailes.
First wil I telle yow of Cambynskan,
That in his time many a cite wan;
And after wil I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif.[5]
For whom ful ofte in grete peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.

---

[1] To heal this hawk with.

[2] A *mew* was the technical name for the place where hawks were kept to mew or moult in.

[3] Blue was the colour of truth, and green of inconstancy; hence, in Chaucer's *Ballade on an Inconstant Lady*:—

'Instede of blewe, thus may ye were al grene.'

[4] The MSS. transpose these two lines, evidently by mistake. Magpies are observed to follow all birds and beasts of prey with loud cries, as if scolding them, to which habit the allusion refers.

[5] The lines of this couplet are also transposed in many MSS. and printed editions. Tyrwhitt puts them right, and observes, 'According to the common arrangement, old Cambuscan is to *win Theodora to his wyf*, and we are not told what is to be the object of Algarsif's adventures.'

And after wil I speke of Camballo,
That fought in listes with the bretheren tuo
For Canace, er that he might hir wynne,
And ther I left I wol ageyn beginne.[1]

* * * * *

THE FRANKELEYNES PROLOGE.

'IN faith, Squier, thou hast the wel y-quit[2]
And gentilly, I preise wel thy wit,'
Quod the Frankeleyn, 'considering thin youthe,
So felingly thou spekest, sire, I aloue the,
As to my dome, ther is non that is here,
Of eloquence that schal be thy pere,
If that thou live; God geve thee goode chance,
And in vertue send the continuance,[3]
For of thy speking I have gret deinte.
I have a sone, and by the Trinite
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
He were a man of swiche discretion,
As that ye ben; fie on possession,[4]

---

[1] In the Lansd. MS., in which *The Squyeres Tale* is followed by *The Tale of the Wyf of Bathe*, the following lines are added as a sort of conclusion to the former :—

'Bot I wil here now maake a knotte
To the time it come next to my lotte;
For here be felawes behinde an hepe treulye,
That wolde talke ful besilye,
And have her sporte as wele as I,
And the daie passeth fast certanly.
Therefore, oste, taketh nowe goode heede
Who schalle next telle, and late him speede.'—W.

[2] All from this verse to the end of the second paragraph, 'That wot I wel that it is good y-now,' being omitted in the Harl. MS., is supplied from the Lansd. by Mr. Wright.

[3] The Lansd. MS. reads *continaunce*, obviously a mistake for continuance.

[4] I care not for property or possession, unless the owner be virtuous.

But if a man be vertuous withal.
I have my sone snibbed, and yet shal,
For he to vertue listeth not to entend,
But for to play at dis, and to dispend,
And lese all that he hath, is his usage;
And he had lever talken with a page,
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Ther he might leren gentillesse aright.'
'Straw for your gentillesse!' quod our hoste.
'What? Frankeleyn, parde, sire, wel thou wost,
That eche of you mote tellen at the lest
A tale or two, or breken his behest.'
'That know I wel, sire,' quod the Frankeleyn,
'I pray you haveth me not in disdein,
Though I to this man speke a word or two,'
'Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.'
'Gladly, sire hoste,' quod he, 'I wol obeye
Unto your wille; now herkeneth what I seye;
I wol you not contrarien in no wise,
As fer as that my wittes may suffice.
I pray to God that it may plesen you,
That wot I wel that it is good y-now.
'This olde gentil Bretons in here daies
Of divers aventures maden laies,[1]
Rimyden in her firste Breton tonge;
Whiche laies with here instrumentes[2] thei songe,
Other elles redden hem for her plesance,
And one of hem have I in remembrance,
Which I schal seie with goode wil as I can.
But, sires, because I am a burel man,

[1] This expression appears to be from the conclusion of Marie's *Lais d'Eliduc*:—

'Del aventure de ces treis,
Li auncien Bretun curteis
Firent le lai pur remembrer.'

[2] They were sung to the harp, as appears from a fragment in Mr. Douce's collection:—

'Bone lais de harpe vus apris,
Lais Bretons de nostre pais.'

At my beginnyng first I you beseche
Haveth me excused of my rude speche,
I lerned never rethorik certeine;
Thinge that I speke, it most be bare and pleine;
I slept never on the mount of Parnaso,
Ne lerned Marcus, Tullius, ne Cithero.[1]
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
But suche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles suche as men deye with or peinte;
Colours of rethorik ben to me queynte;
My spirit feleth[2] nought of suche matiere.
But if you luste my tale schal ye here.'

THE FRANKELEYNES TALE.

[THE Breton lay, from which the Frankeleyne professes to have derived his story, is not known to exist. The subject, however, seems to have survived in a popular *fabliau*, which Boccaccio has drawn upon in the *Decameron*, and also introduced into his *Philocopo*. The reader will observe the difference between the spirit of the Teutonic and of the Breton fable, characteristic of the marked distinction between the Saxon and British races. The former is familiar with traits of daring and heroic virtue, and sometimes of violence and crime; the latter is tinged with a certain soft and refined licentiousness which confuses the moral perception, and indicates the presence of the Italian element introduced by the Roman colonists, but happily expelled from the national character by our Saxon forefathers. In this tale there are passages which equal, and perhaps exceed, in beauty any that Chaucer ever wrote; and indeed nothing but his

[1] This blundering about Cicero's name is probably designed as an affectation by which the country gentleman shows his contempt for all such learning.

[2] A most expressive phrase to denote the inability of an uncultivated mind to appreciate the beauties of style; answering to the French *gouter*.

judicious and elegant treatment could have redeemed so unpleasing a story.]

IN Armorik, that clepid is Bretaigne,
Ther was a knyght, that loved and dede his peyne
To serven a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a grete emprise
He for his lady wrouht, or sche were wonne;
For sche was on the fairest under sonne,
And eke therto com of so hihe kinrede,
That wele unnethes dorst this knyht for drede
Tel hir his woo, his peine, and his distresse.
But at the last, sche for his worthinesse,
And namely for his meke obeissance,
Hath suche a pite caught of his penance,
That prively sche fel of his accorde
To take him for hir husbonde and hir lorde,
(Of suche lordschip as men han over hire wyves);[1]
And, for to lede the more in blisse her lyves,
Of his fre wil he swore hire as a knyht,
That never in his wil be day ne nyht
Ne scholde he upon him take no maistrie
Ageines hir wille, ne kythe hire jelousye,
But hire obeie, and folowe hire wille in al,
As any lover to his lady schal;
Save that the name of sovereignete
That wolde[2] he have for schame of his degre.
Sche thonketh him, and with ful grete humblesse
Sche seide; 'Sir, seththe of youre gentillesse
Ye profer me to have als large a reyne,
Ne, wold nevere God betwix us tweyne,
As in my gulte, were eyther werre or strif.[3]
Sir, I wil be youre humble trewe wif,

[1] Apparently ironical.

[2] The Lansd. MS. reads *nolde*, which completely destroys the meaning of the passage.

[3] Nor, would to God, that there should ever be strife between us two on account of any guilt of mine.

Have here my trouthe, til that myn herte bruste.'
Thus ben they bothe in quiete and in ruste.
For o thinge, sires, saufly dar I seie,
That frendes everyche other motte obeie,
If thei wil longe holde compaigne.
Love wil nouht ben constreyned by maistre.
Whan maistre commeth, the god of love anon
Beteth his winges, and fare wel, he is gon.[1]
Love is a thinge, as any spirit, fre.
Womnen of kinde desiren liberté,
And nouht to be constreined as a thral;
And so doth men, if I the sothe saie schal.
Loke who that is most pacient in love,
He is at his avantage al above.[2]
Paciens is an hihe vertue certein,
For it venquisheth, as this clerkes sein,
Thinges that rigour never sholde atteine.
For every worde men may nouht chide ne pleine.
Lerneth to suffer, or elles, so most I gon,
Ye schul it lerne whether ye wol or non.
For in this world certein no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or seyth som time amis.
Ire, or sikenesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of complexioun,
Causeth ful oft to don amys or speken.
On every wronge men maye nouht be wreken;
After the time most be temperance
To every wight that can of governance.
And therfor hath this worthy wise knight
To liven in ese suffrance hir behight;
And sche to him ful wisely gan to swere,
That nevere schold ther be defaute in hire.
Here may men seen an humble wise accorde;
Thus hath sche take hire servant and hir lorde,

[1] The reader will remark the elegant simplicity and practical wisdom of this passage, so characteristic of Chaucer's genius.

[2] That is, He who asserts the least authority in matters of love, possesses in reality the most.

Servant in love, and lorde in mariage.
Than was he bothe in lordeschipe and servage?
Servage? nay, but in lordeschip al above,
Sethen he hath bothe his lady and his love;
His lady certes, and his wif also,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperite,
Home with his wif he goth to his contre,
Nouht fer fro Penmarke;[1] ther his dwellinge was,
Wher as he leveth in blisse and in solas.
Who couthe telle, but he had wedded be,
The joy, the ese, and the prosperite,
That is betwix an housbond and his wif?
A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,
Til that this knight, of which I spak of thus,
That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus,
Schope him to gon and dwelle a yere or tweyne
In Engelond, that cleped eke was Bretayne,
To seke in armes worschipe and honour,
(For al his lust he set in suche labour);
And dwelleth there tuo yere; the boke seith thus.
Now wil I stint of this Arviragus,
And speken I wil of Dorigen his wif,
That loveth hire husbond as hire hertes lif.
For his absence wepeth sche and siketh,
As don this noble wives whan hem liketh;
Sche morneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, pleyneth;
Desire of his presence hir so distreineth,
That al this wide world sche set at nouht.
Hire frendes, which that knewe hir hevy thouht,

[1] *Penmark* is to be found in the modern maps of Brittany, between Brest and Port l'Orient. All the names in this poem are Breton, and many will be recognized by any one who has been in Wales. *Penmark* is from *Pen*, *caput*, and *mark*, *limes*, *regio*; the first element of the word enters into many Welsh names, as *Penman Mawr*, the great headland. *Cairrud* means the red city; *Cair*, a city, is found in Carnarvon, Carlisle, and Carhnix in Brittany. *Dorigen* or *Dorguen* was the name of the wife of Alain I. Aurelius is a Breton name derived from the Roman colonists. *Arviragus* is apparently a Breton name latinized, as Caractacus from Caradoc, and is found in Juvenal, *Sat.* iv. 127.

Comforten hire in al that ever thei may;
Thei prechen hire, thei tellen hire nyht and day,
That causeles sche sleth hir self, alas!
And every comfort possible in this cas
They don to hire, with al here businesse,
And al to make hire leve hire hevynesse.
By proces, as ye knowen everychone,
Men mowe so longe graven in a stone,
Til som figure therinne emprinted be;
So longe have thei comforted hire, that sche
Receyved hath, by hope and by resoun,
The emprintinge of hire consolacioun.
Thorugh which hire grete sorwe gan assuage;
Sche may not alway duren in suche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in al this care,
Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare,
And that he wolde come hastily ageyn,
Or elles had this sorwe hire herte sleyn.
Hire frendes sauh hire sorwe gan to slake,
And preiden hire on knees, for Goddes sake,
To come and romen in here companye,
Away to driven hire derke fantasie;
And finally sche graunted that requcst,
For wel sche sauh that it was for the best.

Now stode hir castel faste by the see,
And often with hire frendes walked sche,
Hir to disporten on the bank an hihe,
Wher as sche many a schip and barge sihe,
Sailinge her cours, wher as hem liste to go.
But yit was that a parcel of hir wo,
For to hir selve ful oft, 'alas!' seid sche,
'Is ther no schip, of so many as I se,
Wil þringen home my lorde? than were myn herte
Al warisshed of this bitter peine smerte.'

Another time wold sche sitte and thinke,
And kast hir eye dounward fro the brinke;
But whan sche sawh the grisly rokkes blake,
For verray fere so wolde hire herte qwake,

That on hir feet sche myhte nouht hir sustene.
Than wolde sche sit adoun upon the grene,
And pitously into the see biholde,
And seyn right thus, with careful sikes colde.
'Eterne God, that thorugh thy purveance
Ledest this world by certein governance,
In idel,[1] as men sein, ye nothinge make.
But, Lord, this grisely fendely rockes blake,
That semen rather a foule confusioun
Of werke, than any faire creacioun
Of suche a parfit wise God and stable,
Why han ye wrouht this werk unresonable?
For by this werke, southe, northe, este, ne west,
Ther nis i fostred man, ne brid, ne best;
It doth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye nouht, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde
Han rokkes slein, al be they nouht in mynde;
Which mankinde is so faire parte of thy werke,
Thou madest it like to thyn owen merke,[2]
Than, semeth it, ye had a gret cherte
Toward mankinde; but how than may it be,
That ye suche menes make it to destroyen?
Which menes doth no good, but ever anoyen.
I woot wel, clerkes woln sein as hem lest
By argumentz, that al is for the best,
Though I ne can the causes nought y-knowe;
But thilke God that maad the wind to blowe,
As kepe my lord, this is my conclusioun;
To clerkes lete I al disputisoun;
But wolde God, that al this rokkes blake
Were sonken into helle for his sake!
This rokkes slee myn herte for the fere.'
Thus wold sche say with many a pitous tere.
Hire frendes sawe that it nas no disport
To romen by the see, but discomfort,

---

[1] In vain. [2] In thine own image, Gen. ii.

And schopen hem for to pleien somwhere elles.
They leden nire by rivers and by welles,
And eke in other places delitables;
They dauncen and they play at ches and tables.[1]
So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
Unto a gardeyn that was ther beside,
In which that they had made her ordinance
Of vitaile, and of other purveance,
They gon and plaie hem al the longe day;
And this was on the sixte morwe of May;
Which May had peinted with his softe schoures
This gardeyn ful of leves and of floures:
And craft of mannes hond so curiously
Arrayed had this gardeyn trewely.
That never was ther gardeyn of suche pris,
But if it were the verray paradis.
The odour of floures and the fresshe siht,
Wold han y-maked any herte light
That ever was born, but if to gret sikenesse
Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse,
So ful it was of beaute and plesaunce.
And after dinner gan thay to daunce
And singe also, sauf Dorigen alone,
Which made alway hire compleynt and hire mone,
For sche ne sawh him on the daunce go,
That was hir housbond, and hire love also;
But natheles sche moste hir time abide,
And with good hope lete hire sorwe slide.
Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,
Daunced a squier before Dorigen,
That fresscher was and jolier of array,
As to my dome, than is the moneth of May.

---

[1] Chess and backgammon are supposed to be very ancient. The former is mentioned in the *Iliad*. 'Robert of Gloucester,' a poet of the reign of Edward I., enumerates it among other knightly amusements:—

'Wyth pleynge at tables, other atte chekere,
Wyth castynge, other wyth asetynge, other in some ozert manere.'

He singeth and daunseth passing any man,
That is or was siththe that the world began;
Therwith he was, if men schuld him descrive,
On of the beste faringe men on live,
Yonge, strong, riht virtuous, and riche, and wise,
And wel beloved, and holden in gret prise.
And schortly, if the soth I tellen schal,
Unweting of this Dorigen at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that y-cleped was Aurilius,
Had loved hire best of any creature,
Two yere and more, as was his adventure;
But never dorst he tellen hire his grevance,
Withouten cuppe he drank al his penance.[1]
He was dispeired, nothing dorst he seye,
Sauf in his songes somwhat wolde he wreye
His woo, as in a general compleyning;
He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.
Of suche matier made he many layes,
Songes, compleyntes, roundelets, virelayes;[2]
How that he dorste not his sorwe telle,
But languissheth as doth a fuyr in helle;
And deie he must, he seid, as did Ekko[3]
For Narcisus, that dorst nought telle hir wo.
In other maner than ye here me seye
Ne dorst he nouht to hire his wo bewreye,

---

[1] This line is obscure; but it seems to mean, He indulged his sorrow without limit, as one who drinks without cup; *i. e.*, without measure.

[2] Of these kinds of poems we have examples in Chaucer's works, as in *The Complaint of the Blacke Knight*. The poem beginning—

'Alone walking
In thought plainyng
And sore sighing,
All desolate,'

is a specimen of the virelaye, nearly synonymous with 'round' or 'roundelet,' the origin, probably, of what is now called a 'catch.'

[3] *Metamorph.*, lib. iii. 370. Ovid was a favourite author in the middle ages, and Mr. Wright says that the story of *Narcissus* was made the subject of a French *fabliau*.

Sauf that peraventure som time at daunces,
Ther yonge folk kepen her observaunces,
It may wel be he loked on hir face
In suche a wise, as man that axeth grace,
But nothing wiste sche of his entent.
Natheles it happed, er they thennes went,
Because that he was hire neighebour,
And was a man of worschipe and honour,
And had y-knowen him oft times yore,
Thei felle in speche, and forth ay more and more
Unto his purpos drowh Aurilius;
And whan he sawh his time, he seide thus.
'Madame,' quod he, 'by God, that this world made,
So that I wist it might your herte glade,
I wolde that day, that your Arviragus
Went over see, that I Aurilius
Had went ther I schold never come agein;
For wel I wot my servise is in vein,
My guerdon nys but bresting of myn herte.
Madame, reweth upon my peines smerte,
For with a word ye may me sle or save.
Here at youre feet God wold that I were grave!
I ne have as now no leiser more to seye;
Have mercy, swete, or ye wol do me deye.'
Sche gan to loke upon Aurilius;
'Is this your wil,' quod sche, 'and say ye thus?
Never erst,' quod sche, 'ne wist I what ye ment;
But now, Aurilie, I know your entent.
By[1] thilke God, that gave me soule and lif,
Ne schal I never ben untrewe wif
In word ne werk; as fer as I have witte,
I wil ben his to whom that I am knitte.
Take this for final answer as of me.'
But after that in play thus seide sche:
'Aurilie,' quod sche, 'by hihe God above,
Yit wil I graunte you to be your love,

[1] Mr. Wright reads *But*.

(Sin I yow see so pitously compleyne,)
Loke, what day that endelong Breteigne
Ye remewe al the rokkes, ston by ston,
That they ne letten schip ne bote to gon;
I say, whan ye have maad this cost so clene
Of rokkes, that ther nys no ston y-sene,
Than wol I love yow best of any man,
Have here my trouthe, in al that ever I can;
For wel I wot that that schal never betide.
Let suche folie out of youre herte glide.
What deynte scholde a man have in his lif,
For to go love another mannes wif,
That hath hir body whan that ever him liketh?'
Aurilius ful often sore siketh;
'Is ther non other grace in you?' quod he.
'No, by that Lord,' quod sche, 'that maked me.'
Wo was Aurilie whan that he this herde,
And with a sorweful herte he thus answerde.
'Madame,' quod he, 'this were an impossible.
Than moste I deie of sodeyn deth horrible.'
And with that word he turned him anon.
Tho come hir other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and doun,
And nothing wist of this conclusioun,
But sodeynly began to revel newe,
Til that the brighte sonne had lost his hewe,
For the orizont had reft the sonne his liht,
(This is as much to sayn as it was nyht);[1]
And home thei gon in joye and solas;
Sauf only wrecche Aurilius, alas!
He to his hous is gon with sorweful herte.
He saith, he may not from his deth asterte.
Him semeth, that he felt his herte colde.
Up to the heven his handes gan he holde,

[1] The Frankeleyne appears to have been inadvertently betrayed into the use of a poetical expression, which he hastens to translate into plain English.

And on his knees bare he set him doun,
And in his raving seid his orisoun.
For verray wo out of his witte he braide,
He nyst nouht what he spak, but thus he seide;
With pitous herte his pleynt hath he begonne
Unto the goddes,[1] and first unto the sonne.
He seid, 'Apollo, God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tre, and flour,
That givest after thy declinacioun
To eche of hem his tyme and sesoun,
As that thin herbergh chaungeth low and hihe;
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable eye
On wrecche Aurilie, which that am for-lorne.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth y-sworne
Withouten gilt, but thy benignite
Upon my dedly herte have some pite.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you lest,
Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.
Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise
How that I may be holpe and in what wise.
Your blisful suster, Lucina[2] the schene,
That of the see is chief goddes and qwene;—
Though Neptunus have deite in the see,
Yit emperes aboven him is sche;
Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hir desire
Is to be quiked and lihted of your fire,
For which sche folwith yow ful besily,
Right so the see desireth naturelly
To folwen hir, as sche that is goddesse
Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.
Wherfor, lord Phebus, this is my request,
Do this miracle, or do myn herte brest;

---

[1] See *ante*, p. 73, note 1.

[2] One of the names of Diana, here called goddess of the sea, because the tides are influenced by the changes of the moon. He does not address himself to Diana immediately, probably because he could not expect that such a prayer should be favourably received by the goddess of chastity.

That now next at this opposicioun,
Which in the signe schal be of the Lyoun,
As preyeth hire so grete a flood to bringe,
That five fathome at the lest it overspringe
The hihest rokke in Armorik Bretaine,
And let this flod enduren yeres twaine;
Than certes to my lady may I say,
Holdeth your hest, the rokkes ben away.
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
Prey hire sche go no faster cours than ye;
I sey, this, preyeth your suster that sche go
No faster cours than ye this yeres tuo;
Than schal sche even be at ful alway,
And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.
And but sche vouchesauf in suche manere
To graunten me my sovereigne lady dere,
Prey hir to sinken every rok adoun
Into hir owen darke regioun
Under the grounde, ther Pluto duelleth inne,
Or nevermo schal I my lady wynne.
Thy temple in Delphos wil I barfote seke;[1]
Lord Phebus, se the teres on my cheke,
And on my peyne have some compassioun.'
And with that word in sorwe he fel adoun,
And longe time he lay forth in a traunce.
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,
Up cauht him, and to bed he hath him brouht.
Dispeired in this turment and this thouht,
Let I this woful creature lye,
Chese he for me whether he wol leve or deye.
Arviragus with hele and grete honour
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men.
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That hast thy lusty housbond in thin armes,
The fressche knight, the worthy man of armes,

[1] Vows and pilgrimages were common to all forms of religion

That lovetl the, as his owen hertes lif;
Nothing list him to be imaginatif,
If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,
To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
He nouht entendeth to no suche matere,
But daunceth, justeth, and maketh mery chere.
And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwelle,
And of the sike Aurilius wol I telle.
In langour and in turment furius
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurilius,
Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
Ne comfort in this time had he non,
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of al this wo and al this werk;
For to non other creature certein
Of this matere he dorste no word seyn;
Under his brest he bar it more secre
Than ever dede Pamphilus for Galathe.[1]
His brest was hole withouten for to sene,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene;
And wel ye wote that of a sursanure
In surgerie ful perilous is the cure,
But men myght touch the arwe or come therby.
His brother wepeth and weyleth prively,
Til at the last him fel in remembraunce,
That whiles he was in Orleaunce in Fraunce,[2]
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
To reden artes that ben curious,

---

[1] Urry, misled by his classical learning, altered this line to

'Than Polyphemus did for Galathee;'

but the allusion is to a Latin poem popular in Chaucer's time, in which Pamphilus describes his love of Galatea in the following style:—

'Vulneror, et clausum porto sub pectore telum,' &c.

—See TYRWHITT.

[2] The University of Orleans was a celebrated seat of learning till it was supplanted by that of Paris; and, as Mr. Wright remarks, the rivalry between them probably gave rise to the imputation that magic was practised at Orleans.

Seken in every halke and every herne[1]
Particulere sciences for to lerne,
He him remembreth, that upon a day,
At Orleaunce in studie a boke he seye
Of magik naturel, which his felaw,[2]
That was that time a bacheler of law,
Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Had prively upon his desk y-laft;
Which book spak moche of operaciouns
Touchinge the eight and twenty mansiouns
That longen to the mone, and suche folie
As in oure dayes nys not worth a flye;
For holy cherches feith,[3] in our byleve,
Ne suffreth non illusioun us to greve.
And whan this boke was in his remembraunce,
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,
And to him self he seide prively;
'My brother schal be warisshed hastely;
For I am siker that ther be sciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Such as this subtil tregetoures pleyn.[4]
For oft at festes have I wel herd seyn,

---

[1] Every hole and corner. [2] See note 4 below.

[3] In the examination of conscience by the ten commandments, the old books of theology class fortune-telling, magic, interpretation of dreams, and, in short, the belief in any power not dependent upon God, among the breaches of the first commandment.

[4] Tyrwhitt here observes:—'If we compare the feats of the *tregetours*, as described in this passage, with those which are afterwards performed by the clerke's magic, for the entertainment of his guests, we shall find them very similar; and they may both be illustrated by the following account which Sir John Mandevile has given of the exhibition before the *grete chan*:—'And then comen *jogulours* and *enchantoures*, that don many marvaylles; for they maken to come in the ayr the sonne and the mone, be semynge, to every mannes sight. And after they maken the night so dark, that no man may see no thing. And after they maken the day to come ayen fair and pleasant with bright sonne to every mannes sight. And then they bringen in *daunces* of the fairest damyselles of the world and richest arrayed. . . . And than they make *knyghtes* to *jousten* in armes full lustily, &c. And than they make to come in *huntyng* for the hert and for the boor, with houndes renning with open mouthe'—MANDEVILE'S *Travels*, p.

That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Som time hath semed come a grim lyoun;
And som time floures springe as in a mede;
Som time a vine, and grapes white and rede;
Som time a castel al of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon;
Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.
Now than conclude I thus, if that I might
At Orleaunce som olde felaw finde,
That hath this mones mansions in mynde,
Or other magik naturel above,
He scholde wel make my brother have his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes sight, that alle the rokkes blake
Of Breteigne were y-voided everichon,
And schippes by the brinke comen and gon,
And in suche forme endure a day or tuo;
Than were my brother warisshed of his wo,
Than most sche nedes holden hire behest,
Or elles he schal schame hire at the lest.'
What schold I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bedde comen he is,
And suche comfort he gaf him, for to goñ
To Orleaunce, that he up stert anon,
And on his way forth-ward than is he fare,
In hope for to ben lissed of his care.
Whan they were come almost to that cite,
But if it were a tuo furlong or thre,
A yonge clerke roming by himself they mette,
Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.

285—6. See also p. 261 :—' And wher it be by craft or nygromancye, I wot nere.' *Tregetour* appears to be derived from *treget, deceit*, which has probably the same root as *trebuchet*, a machine used in war, also a snare for catching birds. The same word may be traced in the Italian *trabocchetto*, a species of *trap-door*; from which *tregetour* is possibly derived, as Tyrwhitt supposes, in consequence of his frequent use of such deceptions.

And after that he seyd a wonder thinge;
'I know,' quod he, 'the cause of your comynge.'
And er they forther any foote went,
He told hem al that was in her entent.
This Breton clerk him asked of felawes,
The which he had y-knowen in olde dawes;[1]
And he answerd him that they dede were,
For which he wept ful often many a tere.
Doun of his hors Aurilius light anon,
And forth with this magicien is he gon
Home to his hous, and made him wel at ese;
Hem lacked no vitaile that might hem plese.
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,
Aurilius in his lif saw never non.
He schewed him, er they went to soupere,
Forestes, parkes ful of wild dere.
Ther saw he hartes with her hornes hee,
The gretest that were ever seen with eye.
He saw of hem an hundred slain with houndes,
And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.
He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,
Thise faukoners upon a faire rivere,
That with hir haukes han the heron slein.
Tho saw he knyhtes justen in a pleyn.
And after this he dede him suche plesaunce,
That he him schewed his lady in a daunce,
On which him selven daunced, as him thouht.[2]
And whan this maister, that this magik wrouht,
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,
And, fare wel! al the revel is ago.
And yet remued they never out of the hous,
Whiles they sawe alle this sightes mervelous;
But in his stodie, ther his bokes be,
They saten stille, and no wight but they thre.

[1] The change of *days* into *dawes*, for the sake of the rhyme, is a very great poetical licence. The Breton clerk is very naturally represented as asking after his old college companions.

[2] See *ante*, p. 239, note 4.

To him this maister called than his squyere,
And sayde him thus, 'May we go to soupere?
Almost an houre it is, I undertake,
Sin I yow had our soper for to make,
Whan that this worthy men wenten with me
Into my stodie, ther as my bokes be.'
'Sire,' quod this squyere, 'whan it lyketh you,
It is al redy, though ye wolde righte now.'
'Go we than soupe,' quod he, 'as for the best,
This amorous folk som time moste have rest.'
At after[1] soper fel they in trete
What somme schold his maisters guerdon be,
To remue alle the rokkes of Bretaigne,
And eke fro Gerounde to the mouth of Seine.[2]
He made it strange, and swore,[3] so God him save,
Lesse than a thousand pound he wolde nought have,[4]
Ne gladly for that somme he wolde not goon.
Aurilius with blisful hert anoon
Answerde thus; 'Fy on a thousand pound!
This wyde world, which that men say is round,
I wold it give, if I were lord of it.
This bargeyn is ful dryve, for we ben knyt;
Ye schal be payed trewly by my trouthe.
But loketh now, for necligence or slouthe,
Ye tarie us heer no lenger than to morwe.'
'Nay,' quod this clerk, 'have her my faith to borwe.'
To bed is goon Aurilius whan him leste,
And wel neigh al night he had his reste,
What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,
His woful hert of penaunce had a lisse.

[1] The expression *at after* is still used in Yorkshire.

[2] Including the coasts of Saintonge, Poitou, Bretagne, and part of Normandy.

[3] The attentive reader will no doubt have remarked that the correct grammatical inflections of the verb have not been preserved in the part taken from Tyrwhitt, with nearly so much exactness as in that founded upon the Harl. MS. Thus, in this page, we have the verb in the plural, *sweore*, with the subject, *he*, in the singular.

[4] The lacuna in the Harl. MS. ends with this line. See *ante*, p. 222, note 1.

Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
To Breteign take thei the righte way,
Aurilius, and this magicien bisyde,
And ben descendid ther thay wol abyde;
And this was, as these bookes we remembre,
The colde frosty seisoun of Decembre.
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk latoun,
That in his hoote declinacioun
Schon as the burned gold, with stremes bright;
But now in Capricorn adoun he light,
Wher as he schon ful pale, I dar wel sayn.
The bitter frostes with the sleet and rayn
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
Janus sit by the fuyr with double berd,[1]
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;
Biforn him stont the braun of toskid swyn,[2]
And *nowel*[3] crieth every lusty man.
Aurilius, in al that ever he can,

---

[1] Janus, with double beard, represents the winter solstice.

[2] The boar's head was the appropriate dish at Christmas. Aubrey, in a MS., dated 1678, says, 'Before the last civil wars, in gentlemen's houses at Christmas, the first diet that was brought to table was a boar's head with a lemon in his mouth.' Morant, in his account of Horn Church, *Hist. Essex*, i. 74, informs us that 'the inhabitants pay the great tithes on Chrismas-day, and are treated with a bull and brawn. The boar's head is wrestled for. The poor have the scraps.'—BRAND'S *Pop. Antiq.* See *ante*, p. 176, note 5.

[3] Speght says that this word 'signifieth *Deus nobiscum*, and is taken for Christmas and twenty or thirty dales next before.' Tyrwhitt gives another derivation from Menage, in voce Nowel. He says, 'Noël in French is derived from *natalis*, and signified originally a cry of joy at Christmas, *le jour natal de nôtre Seigneur*. It was afterwards the usual cry of the people upon all occasions of joy and festivity.'—*Hist. de Charles VII.*, par Chartier, p. 3. At the proclamation of Henry VI., 'fut crié sur la fosse de son père à haute voix, Vive le Roy Henri, Roy de France et d'Angleterre; et avec cela fut crié *Noël* des assistans, confortans les dits Anglois.' Notwithstanding the high authority of Menage, this word would rather appear to be derived from the French *nouvelles*, news, and to have been adopted as an appropriate cry of joy at the festival of our Lord's nativity, from the angelic announcement to the shepherds, 'Behold, I bring you good *tidings*,' &c., Luke ii. 10; whence the Christian dispensation itself is called Ευαγγελιον, translated into the Saxon Gospel, good news, or nouvelles. The cry *Nowel* will

Doth to his maister chier and reverence,
And peyneth him to doon his diligence
To bringen him out of his peynes smerte,
Or with a swerd that he wold slytte his herte.
This subtil clerk such routhe had of this man,
That night and day he spedeth him, that he can,

---

thus be less inappropriate to any general occasion for rejoicing than it would be if derived from *Deus nobiscum*, or *natalis*.

This view is sustained by the fact that the Christmas carols generally took the form of tidings, or *nouvelles*, delivered by an angel, as in the following simple, but beautiful, specimen in the Northern dialect, printed at Edinburgh in 1621 from an old copy, and given in Brand's *Pop. Antiq.*:—

ANE SONG OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

With the tune of Baw lula law.

ANGELUS LOQUITUR.

I come from hevin to tell
The best *nouellis* that ever befell;
To yow this tythinges trew I bring,
And I will of them say and sing.

This day to yow is borne ane childe
Of Marie meike and Virgine mylde;
That blissit barne, benign and kyndo,
Sall yow rejoice baith heart and mynd.

My saull and lyfe, stand up and see
Quha lyes in ane cribe of tree;
Quhat babe is that, so gude and faire?
It is Christ, God's sonne and aire.

O God! that made all creature,
How art thou become so pure, [poor]
That on the hay and stray will lye,
Amang the asses, oxin, and kye!

O, my deir hert, young Jesus sweit,
Prepare thy creddill in my spreit,
And I sall rocke thee in my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir,
With sangs sweit unto thy gloir;
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that night Balulalow.

But the festival of the Nativity, being one of religious rejoicing was kept, strictly in accordance with Scriptural precedent, as a season of hospitality and good cheer; and thus the idea of religious celebration,

To wayte a tyme of his conclusioun;
This is to say, to make illusioun,
By such an apparence of jogelrie,
(I can no termes of astrologie)
That sche and every wight schold wene and saye,
That of Breteygn the rokkes were awaye,
Or elles they sonken were under the grounde.
So atte last he hath a tyme i-founde
To make his japes and his wrecchednesse
Of such a superstitious cursednesse.
His tables Tollitanes[1] forth he brought
Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,

---

or of mere social festivity, became paramount at Christmas according to the strength or weakness of the religious principle in the popular mind. The former aspect of Christmas-tide is illustrated in numerous carols, of which that just quoted is a specimen; and of the latter we have an example in the following Norman-French carol of the thirteenth century, preserved in MS. in the British Museum, *Bibl. Reg.* 16, E. viii. Here the idea of good eating and drinking supersedes all other considerations.

Seignors, ore entendez à nus,
De loinz sumes venuz à wous,
Pur quere Noel!
Car l'em nus dit que en cest hostel
Soleit tenir sa feste anuel
Ahi, cest iur.
Deu doint a tuz icels joie d'amurs
Qui à Danz Noel ferunt honors!
* * * *
Seignors, jo vus di par Noel,
E par li sires de cest hostil,
Car bevez ben!
E jo primes beverai le men,
E pois après chescon le soen,
Par mon conseil;
Si jo vus di trestox, *Wesseyl!*
Dehaiz eit qui ne dirra *Drincheyl!*

It appears from this that the Norman conquerors thought the *Washail*, and *Drinkhail*, of their Saxon serfs too good a thing not to be adopted into their language and customs.

[1] The astronomical tables composed by order of Alfonso X., King of Castile, about the middle of the thirteenth century, were sometimes called *Tabulæ Toletanæ*, from their being adapted to the city of Toledo. —T. 'The poet describes the *Alphonsine* astronomical tables by the several parts of them, wherein some technical terms occur which were used by the old astronomers, and continued by the compilers of those

Neither his collect, ne his expans yeeres,
Neither his rootes, ne his other geeres,
As ben his centris, and his argumentis,
And his proporcionels convenientis
For her equaciouns in every thing.
And by his thre speeres in his worching,
He knew ful wel how fer Allnath was schove
Fro the heed of thilk fixe Aries above,
That in the fourthe speere considred is.
Ful subtilly he calkiled al this.
Whan he had founde his first mancioun,
He knew the remenaunt by proporcioun;
And knew the arisyng of this moone wel,
And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
And knew ful wel the moones mancioun
Acordaunt to his operacioun;
And knew also his other observaunces,
For suche illusiouns and suche meschaunces,
As hethen folk[1] used in thilke dayes.
For which no lenger maked he delayes,

---

tables. *Collect yeeres* are certain sums of years with the motion of the heavenly bodies corresponding to them, as of 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, &c., disposed into tables; and *expans yeeres* are the single years, with the motions of the heavenly bodies answering to them, beginning at 1, and continued on to the smallest collect sum, as 20, 40, &c. A *root* or *radix* is any certain time, taken at the author's pleasure, from which, as an *era*, the celestial motions are to be computed. By *Proporcionels convenientis* are meant the tables of proportional parts. *Centre, argument*, and other terms there used, have peculiar significations in the old astronomers and the Alphonsine writers, well known to astronomers, which it would be too tedious to explain here, as well as unnecessary for common readers.'—Additions to Urry's *Gloss.* *Speere* means of course sphere. '*Alnath* is a fixed star in the horns of Aries, from whence the first mansion of the moon taketh his name.'—S. *Mancioun* appears to have the same meaning as *house* in the following problem in Chaucer's treatise on the use of the *Astrolabie*:—'The conclusion of the equation of houses after the astrolabie.' *Centris* is explained in the same treatise as follows:—'The names of the sterres ben written in the margine of thy reete [explained before to mean a part of the instrument which resembles a net] there they sit, of the whyche sterres the small point is cleped the *centure*.'

[1] The Franklin very properly classes all these observances among the illusions of the classical idolatry.

But thurgh his magik, for a wike or tweye,
It semed that the rokkes were aweye.
Aurilius, which yet dispayred is
Wher he schal han his love or fare amys,
Awayteth night and day on this miracle;
And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,
That voyded were these rokkes everichoon,
Doun to his maistres feet he fel anoon,
And sayd; 'I wrecched woful Aurilius,
Thanke you, lord, and my lady Venus,
That me han holpe fro my cares colde.'
And to the temple his way forth he hath holde,
Wher as he knew he schold his lady se.
And whan he saugh his tyme, anoon right he
With dredful hert and with ful humble cheere
Salued hath his owne lady deere.
'My soverayn lady,' quod this woful man,
'Whom I most drede, and love, as I can,
And lothest were of al this world displese,
Nere it that I for you have such desese,
That I most deye her at youre foot anoon,
Nought wold I telle how me is wo bygoon,
But certes outher most I dye or pleyne;
Ye sleen me gulteles for verrey peyne.
But of my deth though that ye have no routhe,
Avyseth yow, or that ye breke your trouthe;
Repenteth yow for thilke God above,
Or ye me sleen, bycause that I you love.
For, madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight;
Nat that I chalenge eny thing of right
Of yow, my soverayn lady, but youre grace;
But in a gardyn yonde, at such a place,
Ye wot right wel what ye byhighte me,
And in myn hond your trouthe plighte ye,
To love me best; God woot he sayde so,
Al be that I unworthy am therto;
Madame, I speke it for thonour of yow,
More than to save myn hertes lif right now;

I have do so as ye comaunded me,
And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go se.
Doth as you list, have youre byheste in mynde,
For quyk or ded, right ther ye schul me fynde;
In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye?
But wel I wot the rokkes ben aweye.'
He taketh his leve, and sche astoned stood;
In alle hir face nas oon drop of blood;
Sche wende never have be in such a trappe.
'Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever this schulde happe!
For wend I never by possibilite,
That such a monstre or merveyl mighte be;
It is agayns the proces of nature.'
And hom sche goth a sorwful creature,
For verray fere unnethe may sche go.
Sche wepeth, wayleth al a day or tuo,
And swowneth, that it[1] routhe was to see;
But why it was, to no wight tolde sche,
For out of toune was goon Arviragus.
But to hir self sche spak, and sayde thus,
With face pale, and with ful sorwful chiere,
In hir compleint, as ye schul after hiere.
'Allas!' quod sche, 'on the, Fortune, I pleyne,
That unwar wrapped me hast in thy cheyne,
Fro which tescape, woot I no socour,
Save oonly deth, or elles dishonour;
Oon of these tuo bihoveth me to chese.
But natheles, yet have I lever leese
My lif, than of my body to have schame,
Or knowe my selve fals, or lese my name;
And with my deth I may be quyt, I wys.
Hath ther not many a noble wyf, er this,
And many a mayden, slayn hir self, allas!
Rather than with her body doon trespas?

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[1] Tyrwhitt's reading is here adopted in preference to *in*, that of the Harl. MS., which seems to give no sense.

Yis[1] certeynly; lo, stories[2] beren witnes.
Whan thritty tirauntz ful of cursednes
Hadde slayn Phidon in Athenes atte fest,
Thay comaunded his doughtres to arest,
And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit
Al haked, to fulfille her foule delyt;
And in her fadres blood they made hem daunce
Upon the pavyment, God geve hem meschaunce.
For which these woful maydens, ful of drede,
Rather than they wolde lese her maydenhede,
They prively ben stert into a welle,
And drenched hem selfen, as the bookes telle.
'They of Mecene leet enquere and seeke
Of Lacidomye fifty maydenes eeke,
On which thay wolden doon her leccherie;
But was ther noon of al that companye

---

[1] It is observed by the Rev. R. Chenevix Trench, in his admirable work *On the Study of Words*, that 'the fine distinction between 'yea' and 'yes,' 'nay' and 'no,' that once existed in English, has quite disappeared. 'Yea' and 'Nay' in Wiclif's time, and a good deal later, were the answers to questions framed in the affirmative. 'Will he come?' To this it would be replied, 'Yea,' or 'Nay,' as the case required. But 'Will he not come?'—to this the answer would have been 'Yes' or 'No.' Sir Thomas More finds fault with Tyndale, that in his translation of the Bible he had not observed this distinction, which was evidently, therefore, going out even then—that is, in the reign of Henry VIII., and shortly after it was quite forgotten.' It will be seen that this distinction is strictly maintained in Chaucer's language. Here Dorigen frames her question in the negative form, 'Hath ther *nat* many a noble wyf?' &c.—to which she properly answers 'Yis.' Again, in page 253, the philosopher asks, 'Have I *not* holden covenaunt?' &c.—and the answer again is, 'Yis.' Whereas, at page 87, the answer to the question 'Than have I gete of yow the maystry?' &c.—is 'Ye.' Many examples of both forms will be found in *The Freres Tale* and *Sompnours Prologe*. The negative reply to a question framed in an affirmative form is always 'Nay,' as, at page 252, the answer to the question 'Is ther aught elles?'—is 'Nay.' Analogous, though not exactly similar to this, is the distinction in French between 'Oui' and 'Si.' The former is the reply to a question in the affirmative form, as 'Aimez vous Paris?' 'Oui;' the latter is used to contradict a negative assertion, as, 'Je crains que vous n'aimiez pas Paris'—'Si, je l'aime.'

[2] They are all taken from *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum*, lib. i. c. 39.—T.

That sche nas slayn, and with a good entente
Ches rather for to deye, than to assente
To ben oppressed of hir maydenhede.
Why schuld I than to deyen ben in drede?
'Lo eek the tyraunt Aristoclides,'
That loved a mayden heet Stimphalides,
Whan that hir father slayn was on a night,
Unto Dyanes temple goth sche right,
And hent the ymage in hir hondes tuo,
Fro which ymage wold sche never go,
No wight might of it hir hondes arace,[1]
Til sche was slayn right in the selve place.
Now sith that maydens hadde such despit
To ben defouled with mannes foul delit,
Wel aught a wyf rather hir self to sle,
Than be defouled, as it thenketh me.
'What schal I seyn of Hasdrubaldes wyf,
That at Cartage byraft hir self the lyf?
For whan sche saugh that Romayns wan the toun,
Sche took hir children alle, and skipte adoun
Into the fuyr, and ches rather to deye,
Than eny Romayn dide hir vilonye.
'Hath nought Lucresse slayn hir self, allas!
At Rome, whanne sche oppressid was
Of Tarquyn? for hir thought it was a schame
To lyven, whan sche hadde lost hir name.
'The seven maydens of Milesie also
Han slayn hem self for verray drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gawle hem schulde oppresse.
Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Couthe I now telle as touching this matiere.
'Whan Habradace was slayn, his wif so deere
Hir selven slough, and leet hir blood to glyde
In Habradaces woundes, deepe and wyde;

---

[1] *Arace*, which is Tyrwhitt's reading, is adopted instead of *race*, that of the Harl. MS., as suiting the metre better. Both words are from *arracher*.

And seyde, my body atte leste way
Ther schal no wight defoulen, if I may.
What schold I mo ensamples herof sayn?
Seththen so many han hem selven slayn
Wel rather than they wolde defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is best for me
To slen my self than be defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or rather sle my self in som manere,
As dede Democionis doughter deere.
Bycause sche wolde nought defouled be.
O Cedasus, it is ful gret pite
To reden how thy doughteren dyed, allas!
That slowe hem self for suche maner caas.
As gret a pite was it or wel more,
The Theban mayden, that for Nichonore
Hir selven slough, right for such maner wo.
Another Theban mayden dede right so,
For oon of Macidone had hir oppressed,
Sche with hire deth hire maydenhede redressed.
What schal I sayn of Niceratis wif,
That for such caas biraft hir self hir lyf?
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades
His love, that for to dyen rather ches,
Than for to suffre his body unburied be?
Lo, which a wif was Alceste?' quod sche,
'What saith Omer of good Penolope?
Al Grece knoweth of hir chastite.
Pardi, of Laodomya is writen thus,
That whan at Troye was slayn Prothesilaus,
No lenger wol sche lyve after his day.
The same of noble Porcia telle I may;
Withoute Brutes kynde sche myght not lyve,[1]
To whom sche had al hool hir herte gyve.

[1] This verse is restored from the Harl MS. It is rejected by Mr. Wright; but it appears to give as good a meaning, and to be a better line than Tyrwhitt's.

The parfyt wyſhod of Artemesye
Honoured is thurgh al the Barbarie.
O Teuta[1] queen, thy wifly chastite
To alle wyves may a mirour be.'
Thus playned Dorigen a day or tweye,
Purposyng ever that sche wolde deye;
But natheles upon the thridde night
Hom cam Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And asked hir why that sche wept so sore;
And sche gan wepe ever lenger the more.
'Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever was I born!
Thus have I sayd,' quod sche, 'thus have I sworn;'
And told him al, as ye han herd bifore;[2]
It nedeth nought reherse it you no more.
This housbond with glad chiere in good wise
Answerd and sayde, as I schal you devyse.
'Is ther aught elles, Dorigen, but this?'
'Nay, nay,' quod sche, 'God me so rede and wis,
This is to moche, and it were Goddes wille.'
'Ye, wyf,' quod he, 'let slepe that may be stille,
It may be wel peraunter yet to day,
Ye schal your trouthe holden, by my fay.
For God so wisly have mercy on me,
I hadde wel lever i-stekid for to be,
For verray love which that I to you have,
But if ye scholde your trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the heighest thing that man may kepe.'
But with that word he gan anoon to wepe,
And sayde, 'I yow forbede up peyne of deth,
That never whil ye lasteth lyf or breth,
To no wight telle you of this aventure.
As I may best I wil my woo endure.
Ne make no contenaunce of hevynesse,
That folk of you may deme harm or gesse.'
And forth he cleped a squyer and a mayde.
'Go forth anoon with Dorigen,' he sayde,

[1] Harl. MS., *O Thena.*
[2] The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, reads *bifore.*

'And bryngeth hir to such a place anoon.'
Thay take her leve, and on her wey they gon;
But thay ne wiste why sche thider went,
He nolde no wight tellen his entent.
This squyer, which that hight Aurilius,
On Dorigen that was so amerous,
Of aventure happed hire to mete
Amyd the toun, right in the quyke[1] strete;
As sche was boun to goon the wey forth-right
Toward the gardyn, ther as sche had hight.
And he was to the gardyn-ward also;
For wel he spyed whan sche wolde go
Out of hir hous, to eny maner place.
But thus thay mette of adventure or grace,
And he saluëth hir with glad entent,
And askith hire whider-ward sche went.
And sche answered, half as sche were mad,
'Unto the gardyn, as myn housbond bad,
My trouthe for to holde, allas! allas!'
Aurilius gan wondren on this caas,
And in his hert had gret compassioun
Of hire, and of hir lamentacioun,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad hir hold al that sche hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif schuld breke hir trouthe.
And in his hert he caught of this gret routhe,
Consideryng the best on every syde,
That fro his lust yet were him lever abyde,
Than doon so high a cheerlissch wrecchednesse
Agayns fraunchis of alle gentilesce;
For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.
'Madame, saith to your lord Arviragus,
That sith I se his grete gentilesse
To you, and eek I se wel your distresse,

[1] The meaning of this epithet is not obvious; but it must signify the crowded street, that is, the street which was *quick*, or *alive*, with people, the most frequented street, as we say, the Main street, or High street, of a country town.

That him were lever have schame (and that were
Than ye to me schulde breke youre trouthe, [routhe]
I have wel lever ever to suffre woo,
Than I departe the love bytwix yow tuo,
I yow relesse, madame, into your hond
Quyt every seurement and every bond
That ye han maad to me as herbiforn,
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trouthe I plight, I schal yow never repreve
Of no byhest, and her I take my leve,
As of the trewest and the beste wif
That ever yit I knew in al my lyf.
But every wyf be war of hir byhest;
On Dorigen remembreth atte lest.
Thus can a squyer doon a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knyght, withouten drede.'[1]
Sche thanketh him upon hir knees al bare,
And hoom unto hir housbond is sche fare,
And told him al, as ye han herd me sayd;
And, be ye siker, he was so wel apayd,
That it were impossible me to write.
What schuld I lenger of this caas endite?
Arviragus and Dorigen his wif
In sovereyn blisse leden forth here lyf,
Never eft ne was ther anger hem bytwen;
He cherisscheth hir as though sche were a queen,
And sche was to him trewe for evermore;
Of these tuo folk ye gete of me nomore.
Aurilius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
Curseth the tyme that ever he was born.
'Allas!' quod he, 'allas, that I byhight
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight
Unto this philosophre! how schal I doo?
I se no more, but that I am for-doo.
Myn heritage moot I needes selle,
And ben a begger, her may I not duelle,

[1] See *ante*, p. 35, note 4.

And schamen al my kynrede in this place,
But I of him may gete better grace
But natheles I wol of him assay
At certeyn dayes yeer by yer to pay,
And thanke him of his grete curtesye.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lye.'
With herte soor he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philosophre,
The value of fyf hundred pound, I gesse,
And him bysecheth of his gentilesse
To graunte him dayes of the remenaunt;
And sayde, 'Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
I fayled never of my trouthe as yit.
For sikerly my dettes schal be quyt
Towardes yow, how so that ever I fare
To goon and begge in my kurtil bare;
But wolde ye vouchesauf upon scurte
Two yer or thre for to respite me,
Than were I wel, for elles most I selle
Myn heritage, ther is nomore to telle.'

This philosophre sobrely answerde,
And seyde thus, whan he these wordes herde;
'Have I not holden covenaunt unto the?'
'Yis certes, wel and trewely,' quod he.
'Hastow nought had thy lady as the liketh?'
'No, no,' quod he, and sorwfully he siketh.
'What was the cause? tel me, if thou can.'
Aurilius his tale anoon bygan,
And told him al as ye han herd bifore,
It needeth nat to you rehêrse it more.
He sayde, Arviragus of gentilesse
Had lever dye in sorwe and in distresse,
Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals.
The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde him als,
How loth hir was to ben a wykked wyf,
And that sche lever had han lost hir lyf;
And that hir trouthe sche swor thurgh innocence
Sche never erst hadde herd speke of apparence

'That made me han of her so gret pyte.
And right as frely as he sente hir to me,
As frely sent I hir to him agayn.[1]
This is al and som, ther is no more to sayn.'
The philosophre answerde, 'Leve brother,
Everich of yow dede gentilly to other;
Thow art a squyer, and he is knight,
But God forbede, for his blisful might,
But if a clerk couthe doon as gentil dede
As wel as eny of you, it is no drede.
Sire, I relesse the thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crope out of the ground,
Ne never er now ne haddest knowen me.
For, sire, I wil not take a peny of the
For al my craft, ne nought for my travayle;[2]
Thou hast y-payed wel for my vitayle.
It is y-nough, and far wel, have good day.'
And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordynges, this questioun wolde I axe now,[3]
Which was the moste free, as thinketh yow?
Now telleth me, or that I further wende,
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

[1] Harl. MS. reads these two lines thus:—

'Because hir housebond sente hir to me,
And right as frely sent I hir to him agayn.'

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *al my travaile*, which spoils the metre.

[3] The same question is stated in the conclusion of Boccaccio's tale, *Philoc.* lib. v. 'Dubitasi ora qual di costoro fusse maggior liberalità,' &c. The Queen determines in favour of the husband.—T. Such were the questions decided in the 'Courts of Love.'

END OF VOL. II.

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Government of Maharashtra
on 07 April, 2016